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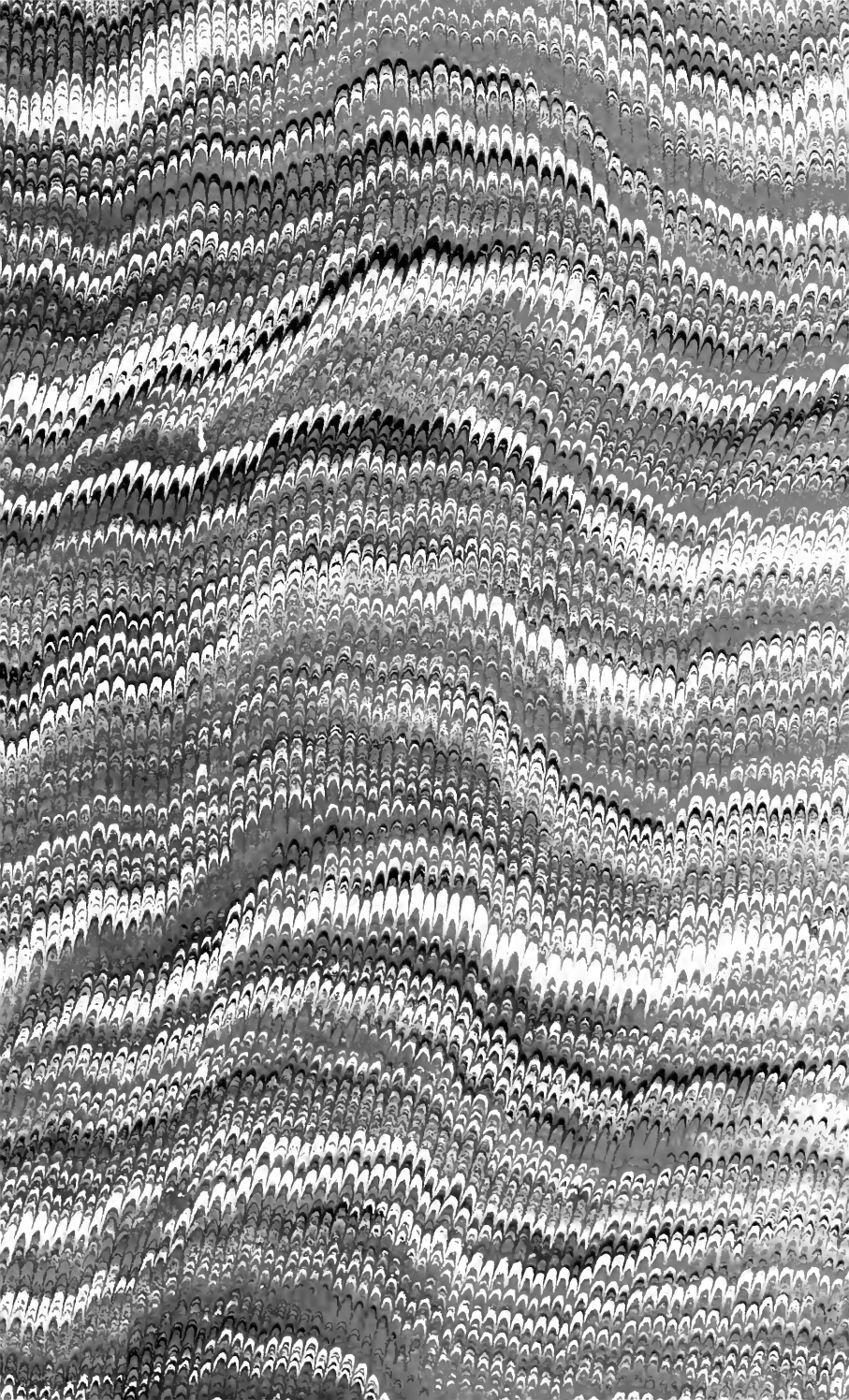
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DRAMATIC CHAPTERS,

Poems and Songs.

BY

CHARLES SWAIN,

AUTHOR OF "THE MIND," "ENGLISH MELODIES,"
ETC., ETC.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

1850.

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TO

LOT GARDINER, ESQ^{RE}.

AS A

TRIBUTE OF SINCERE ESTEEM FOR HIS CHARACTER,

AND

IN MEMORY OF HOURS MADE HAPPY

BY HIS FRIENDSHIP,

These Dramatic Chapters

ARE RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED.

537011

Though to-day be full of sorrow,
There is comfort in the morrow.

Hope doth never quite deceive ;
If the soul hath care upon her,
Hearts, whose every pulse is honour,
Gather solace whilst they grieve !

Sharper, nearer, darker, drearer,
Though our sorrows strike severer,

Still amidst the clouds of ill
He, who every comfort gave us,
In affliction yet can save us,
Aid us, guide us, cheer us, still.

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DRAMATIC CHAPTERS.

Chapter II.

LIEUTENANTS SOMERVILLE AND PERCIVAL.

SCENE — *The Garrison, Fort St. George, India.*

SOMERVILLE.

I MARVEL that thou seek'st to screen this Delmont,
And urge excuses for his gallantries !
A wedded man should nurse his home-born flowers,
Not trespass o'er his neighbour's pales, and rob
Some unprotected garden of its bloom.

PERCIVAL.

I screen no gallantries ; — and yet methinks,
If woman took but half the pains to keep
The husband which she used to win the lover,
The home-born flowers, of which you seem so fond,
Might charm so much, all other sweets were songs

SOMERVILLE.

And this you think?

PERCIVAL.

Most veritably think.

Have I not marked the dull wife's face expand
To sudden joy if but a neighbour called ;
And straight insipidly contract again
When the poor husband entered, labour-worn,
And asked her for a song — some favourite air,
Some tune of bygone hours — to cheer his heart,
And dissipate his care and thought of toil?
There was a time, at such request, at once
She would have smiled a thousand sweet consents ;
But now (*mimicking*), "She has no taste — she has forgot ;
People are all so clever now-o'-days,
She fears to touch harp or piano more."
What does the man?

SOMERVILLE.

Ay, what does he?

PERCIVAL.

Why, if the man be worthy of the name,
He'll take his hat, and find his home elsewhere
Till warmer welcome greets him. As for me —
For me — oh ! I would ——

SOMERVILLE.

Tell us, what wouldst thou?

Bachelors' wives are ever the best managed :

Mark me, thou'lt be the veriest henpecked — hem !
That ever blessed a clever wife withal.

PERCIVAL.

I'll be a Tartar !

SOMERVILLE.

Had I a sister, I durst venture it.
Your fiery-dragon lovers ever make
Most dove-like husbands. We shall see, mayhap,
'Thou may'st be called "the pattern Percival" —
Of moral spouse a marvellous specimen !
'Tartar ! — thou'lt be the very cream of tartar
(Something to cool, not irritate the blood).
However, 'twere a matter somewhat hard
To match that demon, Delmont.

PERCIVAL.

Hum ! Talk of sisters — now, had I one wed
To such a churl — a husband without honour,
A soldier without courage, I would — zounds ! —
And yet the fellow must have something good,
Or why are all the women thus enamoured ?
His wife, despite his usage, doats on him.
Never tell me : that man is not all bad
Whom all the women fondle, be assured.

SOMERVILLE.

What wouldst thou give me for a special secret,
The secret of success with womankind,
The talisman most apt to win her heart ?
'Tis worth thy whole commission. What wilt give ?

PERCIVAL.

They're golden secrets that are worth the buying.
Give? quotha, give? I'll give — thee leave to tell it.

SOMERVILLE.

'Then I am mum.

PERCIVAL.

Pish! tell thy secret.

SOMERVILLE.

'Tis —

PERCIVAL.

Out with it!

SOMERVILLE.

'Tis talking, comrade, talking — talk, talk, talk,
Of any thing or nothing, as it lits —
So that you talk, no matter what about.
The maids may knit their pretty brows, perchance —
Dub you a chatterer — cry, you are too free —
A giddy-brain — a heedless rattlepate —
Command you from their sight — nay, shut their ears;
Yet still the more they chide, the more they crave.
Woman's the true Narcissus of our age,
And falls in love with what's most like herself:
The more effeminate, the more men thrive,
And there's the secret of success in Delmont.
The man's a tongue — i'faith the man's a tongue!
A tongue of tongues — the very best of tongues!
To hear himself, the creature's all perfection,

Virtue and truth his right hand and his left ;
 Nothing he does but smacks of something great, —
 Easy to him, to others out of reach.
 Delmont's a tongue as good as had his mother ;
 If he'd no other fortune from her house,
 He owes her gratitude for such a tongue.

PERCIVAL.

Ay, there it is : I lack that lipsome charm
 That wins advantage — that aspiring grace
 Which climbs the steep of human prejudice —
 That promiser, which pours its golden gifts
 Into the ear the while it starves the hearer,
 Mocking his hunger with much-talked-of feasts.
 Though scarce the bulk of but the dove's weak heart,
 'Tis knit to power which foils the lion's fangs,
 Making his strength a scorn : where he rends bones,
 The mightier tongue rends kingdoms. Mark ye, sir,
 'Tis throned above all thrones — crowns and uncrowns
 All heads — leads and misleads all governments :
 'Tis all supreme ; for know, 'twas Helen's tongue —
 Her tongue, and not her charms — set Troy in flames :
 (And homes of less renown it fires e'en now.)
 'Twas Warwick's tongue that made and unmade kings ;
 'Twas —

SOMERVILLE.

Whew ?
 Some rabid beldame, sure, hath bit the man !
 No more, good friend, as thou art merciful.
 To sum up all Love's requisites at once, —
 A winning tongue, fine form, and handsome face, —

If these please not, then 'tis no pleasing case :
But still, make no excuse for Delmont's guile.

PERCIVAL.

Who, I? — not I. But hath she no protector,
No relative, no friend, to interfere?

SOMERVILLE.

None.

In the defences of the last long siege
Her sire was slain ; and her brave brother lies
In Hyder's dungeon still, a prisoner.

PERCIVAL.

And Delmont hath the heart to use her thus !
So much for secret weddings. When I'm wed
A dozen spires, and thrice three dozen bells,
Shall ring of it. I would as soon not wed
As wed in secret ; and when I've a wife —
Oh, Somerville, when I've a wife ——

SOMERVILLE.

Ay, when !

Wait but till then : the pattern Percival,
With six small children — mercy on us, six !
Come along. Marry, forsooth ? marry thy gun ;
Better a gun than a wife, for that brings
Its own stock. Marry, Percival ? what, thou,
Whose revenue is just three groats per day ?

PERCIVAL.

Three ? — six times three !

SOMERVILLE.

Ha, ha, ha ! six times three — what a treasury !
 Come along ; thou shalt be wed, never fear.
 Six times three !

[*Exeunt, SOMERVILLE bantering.*]

Chapter III.

DELMONT AND OLIVIA.SCENE — *An old Indian mansion on the banks of a river.*

OLIVIA.

[Discovered gazing from the window : she speaks.]

I HAVE outwatched the hour — night's star is out ;
And like a tear, too sweet for sorrow's cheek,
Still to the closing rose the dew-drop clings.
Oh, favoured tree ! with thy young leaves of hope,
Thy bloom of promises, thy fragrant sighs,
Thy modest beauty, blushing to be seen —
Oh, for thy sweetness, tenderness, and grace
Be henceforth called, thou rose, the Tree of Love !
And for thy name, charm thou the air with sweets ;
Spread thine enchantments round for him, whose step,
If melody may have its flowers of sound,
Is as the rose to mine expecting heart.
How is't that I am thus absorbed in him ?
My love scarce known a month — nay, not a month —
'Tis not three weeks till ten to-morrow morn.
Oh, be that hour to memory consecrate !

Three weeks! — 'tis but a feather on time's breath,
 But breathed by love it seems a whole life long,
 For love lives years in moments. — Still he lingers:
 Our eastern lattice yields a wider glance
 O'er hill and river, palm and cedar-glade, —
 I'll to its aid, and watch till he return.
 Alas, how small a thread seems time departed —
 How thick a web seems weary time to come!

[OLIVIA retires. *As she retires, a boat is seen
 approaching. DELMONT springs ashore,
 and reconnoitres.*]

DELMONT.

Not here — and not expecting me, 'twould seem!
 Or hides she yet a moment from my sight,
 Intent to glad me with some sweet surprise?
 No — nothing stirring. Now, were I to list
 The sober counsel of my quiet thought,
 I should return, nor risk the double wrong
 Of maid betrayed and trustful wife aggrieved.
 Yet if dame Nature formed me to adore,
 It is her fault, not mine; if naturally
 I am inconstant, who's to blame but Nature?
 If I find happiness in love's pursuit,
 It is a common law of man's existence, —
 All men are in pursuit of happiness:
 And being man — not furnishing myself,
 Having no prescript in mine own construction
 If I am loving, and yet treacherous,
 Eager to flatter where I would deceive,
 If I am vicious, selfish, passionate, —
 'Tis Nature's marring of right elements,

Not mine. I would abhor that bliss, Variety,
Be constant as an Echo — if I could.

[OLIVIA returns to the casement: he perceives her.]

Olivia! oh, methought it was some flower
The wanton wind had 'gainst thy casement thrown,
When, lo! it proves thyself — love's sweeter flower!
Oh, fairest born the night hath yet beheld,
Come forth, bright Grace; or shall I climb to thee?
These ivy-roots were ladders meet for love.
Say "Yes," and I am with thee like a bird,
And thou shalt sing to me amid the leaves
As Beauty sang to Mars.

OLIVIA.

Ah, flatterer!

Would I could see thine eyes — oft truth is there
When falsehood's on the lip. — Nay, climb not here;
I will descend to thee.

[Quits the casement.]

DELMONT, *alone*.

Bewitching woman! was it possible
That I conceived the thought of quitting thee,
To win whose love I'd peril all I hold?
Her I first wed would I divorce for thee,
And wed again, so thou wouldst be my bride —
Ay, wed again! though from his awful grave
Her father's hand should rise to warn me back.

Enter OLIVIA, singing.

What the Sun is to the Morning
When she blushing meets his view,

Gladdening all, and all adorning, —
Flattery, maiden, is to you.

DELMONT.

Nay, sweet, no satire against flattery.
What warms to pleasure the young maiden's cheek,
Lends to her step the lightness of a Grace,
And breathes an atmosphere of love around?
Flattery!
The minstrel lists, and calls its accents Fame;
The warrior wears the medal flattery yields,
And prates of conquest with a front of Jove:
If thou'dst not rob the world of its best coin,
No treason, good my love, 'gainst flattery.

OLIVIA.

Go on — I love to listen; though methinks,
Thy praise, fair sir, is satire in disguise;
But still, go on — it is a fruitful theme.

DELMONT.

Oh, let me urge a more impassioned theme!
I love thee, dearest — love thee, my Olivia!
Crush not the hopes that kneel around thy feet,
And beg to live and feed upon thy smile.

OLIVIA.

Is love so very sudden in its growth?
Love *first* is in the sight — then in the thought —
Next in the heart — and thence pervades the soul!
'Tis but "in sight" with thee? at best "in thought";
And thought can change as easily as the clouds

Which take whatever form the sight may please.
When saw'st thou me the first? It cannot be;
'Tis something else which thou mistak'st for love.

DELMONT.

I wonder when's the time I loved thee not!
Though true, perchance, I have not known thee long,
Yet could I swear I'd known thee all my life:
Thou seem'st so much a portion of that life,
I scarce can deem they e'er were separate.

OLIVIA.

I must confess it seems I'd known thee long.

DELMONT.

Oh, blest confession! — then thou lovest me, sweet?

OLIVIA.

I said not so.

DELMONT.

'Tis true, I am not rich,
No honours, fortune, fame, to share with thee;
Or if — of such slight import, they seem dwarfed
Beside thy beauteous self! — But were I rich —

OLIVIA.

And if thou wert?
Love is not to be bought — 'tis of the soul
The noblest element, the spirit-bond
That links the angel with humanity.
As well might'st thou attempt to purchase heaven,

To vend the stars, make traffic of the skies,
 Or measure out what is immeasurable,
 As count each feeling in the pulse of love,
 Its height, its depth, its softness, beauty, strength,
 And price affections as thou wouldst estates !
 Go to ! for shame ! — thy tongue belied thy heart.
 Love is God's seal upon the universe —
 The hand and sign of His omnipotence ;
 And hearts enshrining love the most on earth,
 Find here the most of heaven.

DELMONT.

Oh, true — devoutly, eloquently true !
 And yet, dear girl, my wish was natural :
 Love's ever prodigal of its possessions,
 Gives all away, yet longs for more to give ;
 Love craves a thousand things to yield to love —
 Would give the world, yet count itself but poor :
 'Twas thus I meant. — Come, tell me if thou lovest ?

OLIVIA.

Canst thou not read it in these blushing lines
 My heart too swiftly writes upon my cheek,
 And tells thee, ere my tongue, how dear thou art ?
 Yet, Delmont, is it wisely risked of me,
 An orphan, knowing none, scarce knowing thee,
 To stake my all of earthly happiness
 Upon a stranger's oath of constancy ?
 And yet, if truth e'er spoke in human face,
 It speaks in thine, my Delmont ; honour lives
 Upon thy brow as 'twere its natal home —
 A temple fit for such a god to claim.

DELMONT.

Who flatters now? But list! behind yon rock,
Deep roofed with trees, and tapestried with moss,
I saw an old half Indian temple hid,
As Nature of her shrine held jealous care;
Thither, sweet maid, if thou wilt deign it so,
The priest our loving hearts and hands shall join.

OLIVIA.

Delmont!

DELMONT.

My life!

OLIVIA.

Delmont!

DELMONT.

What fears my love?

OLIVIA.

Let me first look once more upon thy face.
Thus——I am an orphan, Delmont—one whose years,
Few as they seem, have suffered many sorrows!
Think thou beholdst my mother at my side,
Her whom the grave hath hidden from my sight,
But whose dear love still hovers round her child;
Think 'tis her voice that pleads within me now;
And if thy suit be worthy of her child—
Such suit as thou daredst urge were she alive—
If thou art faithful in the eye of Heaven,
Look up—and ask from *her*—from *her*—*my hand*.

DELMONT,

[*Looking as she directs.*]

As thou desir'st, I ask it, my Olivia.

OLIVIA.

Then it is thine, dear Delmont.

[*She gives her hand fondly and confidingly :
he leads her through the gateway into the
garden. Scene closes.*]

Chapter III.

ELLEN, *Wife of COLONEL DELMONT.*

ADOLPHUS, *her Son, aged seven years.*

HANNAH, *an old and faithful Domestic.*

SCENE — *An Apartment, near the Garrison.*

ELLEN.

WELL, Hannah, he is here, and safe at last ;
But grant him no such liberty again,
What ! cross the river from the garrison ! —
You shall have neither boat nor spear, young sir,
If you attempt such silly risks again.

ADOLPHUS.

But oh, I must mamma, must have my spear.
My father said that I might have my spear ;
When I'm a man, I am to be soldier.

HANNAH.

First be a man, a soldier afterwards ;
But, boy, use manhood better than thy sire.

ADOLPHUS.

What is that you say, nurse?

ELLEN.

Hark, hark! the troops are marching by the door;
Go out, and watch; 'tis fine to see them march!

[*Exit ADOLPHUS.*]

Your faithfulness, my Hannah, warrants much;
And I o'erlook the heat and hastiness
Which are the flaws of your incautious zeal:
Say, was it well to speak before the boy?
A single seed implanted in his mind
May grow to flower, and sweeten his young life,
Or turn to *weed*, and poison all his days.
He should learn nothing ill against his sire:
He *will* learn nothing, if thou lov'st his mother.

HANNAH.

My honoured lady — oh! oftentimes my heart
Seems as 'twould speak or burst.

Your haughty lord

Is all unworthy this unceasing care
To screen his conduct: this most useless heed.
His acts are tongues, which, could you stay men's mouths,
Would speak themselves, without or mouth or tongue.
Lady, I'm growing grey in servitude;
These arms so oft have nursed *you* at my breast
When you were motherless, that I forget
At times my station. Oh! 'tis bitter, lady,
To nurse the infant you must not call child;
To have a mother's love, yet feel that you
Are but a vassal in that child's esteem!

Yet of a good and honest race I come,
Nor lowly born nor bred —

ELLEN.

Again too hot ; but 'tis thy over zeal —
A failing of thy temper, not thy truth.
Therefore no more : you fill mine ears with tales,
My heart with tears, my mind with misery,
And then urge *faithfulness* in brief excuse.
If Delmont loves not now, he loved me once ;
If he's indifferent, haply 'twas my fault ;
If harsh and cold, where should his faults be hid
But in the bosom of his truthful wife ?
It may not be that *he* is all to blame ;
I have a hundred faults, which being slight
Are haply not less difficult to bear.
I am too serious, silent, spiritless,
For one enamoured of society.
His gaiety —

HANNAH.

Would it were gaiety, and nothing more !

ELLEN.

Of what dare any one accuse him more ?

HANNAH.

Men speak to one another what they ne'er
Dream of proclaiming to an injured wife ;
None, save a creature *over-warm* for prudence,
Would let her tongue put *place* in jeopardy.
I list the things which gain no entrance here,
Things that would change this confidence to *doubt*.

ELLEN.

Doubt? Never! —

I'd tear the traitorous portion from my heart
Which dared to doubt his honour: — Doubt?

HANNAH.

The wisest doubt.

Doubt all things, and of all things Man the most.
Your husband

ELLEN, *incensed*.

Nurse! —

HANNAH.

I say your husband wrongs you.

ELLEN.

One truth you've learnt — which is, that I can love.
One truth you've yet to learn — that I can hate.

HANNAH.

Wilt thou go with me, and believe thine ears?

[*ELLEN hesitates.*]

In one brief hour the boat will place us where
There'll need no second voice to prove him false.
Wilt thou go with me?

ELLEN.

To prove him false!

HANNAH.

The boat is at the stair.

ELLEN.

To prove . . . quick ! lead me !

[*Passes over to HANNAH, then pauses.*]

I will not go.

HANNAH.

Nor thine own ears believe ?

ELLEN.

No — nor mine eyes.

No, ere these eyes could witness to his shame,
My heart would *blind them* with its own quick tears
And shut out truth for ever. There's a word,
A word — a little word — so full of love,
'Twould hold its faith against a world of proof;
That word is Wife !

HANNAH.

He does deny the rite.

[*ELLEN starts, but expresses dissent.*]

Nay, 'tis even said

He meditates a marriage with another.

ELLEN.

'Tis false ! impossible ! but now I see

Thou art resolved indeed to drive me mad.

[*Walks agitatedly.*]

HANNAH.

He owns no rite, acknowledges no priest ;
Nay, even *now*, woos one into the toil
Through which he lured thine unsuspecting truth.

But he must hire some other knavish priest ;
He who wed thee *is dead* !

ELLEN.

Dead ! the priest who wed us, dead !
Denies his marriage ! — *wedding*, dost thou say ?
Then what am I ? and what, O heaven ! my child ?

HANNAH.

I spoke to *rouse*, not sink thy nature thus :
I bring thee truth, put in its boldest shape,
To stir thee into action, — thou must act ! —
But ere thou act'st — must hope !

ELLEN.

Hope ? — woman's hope ? — Oh ! 'tis the breath of heaven,
The iris of her being ! but her fate
Is in the breath of man, and there, alas !
All things of heaven do wither and consume.
O my poor brother ! should his dungeon-walls
Repeat one echo of this misery,
How will he wrench the chains which bind his limbs !
He *dare not* do it ! — though priest be dead,
And evidence removed — he dare not do it !
I have a brother still —

HANNAH.

Would he were here !

ELLEN.

He will be here ! —
As surely as the deed, he will be here !

Heaven hath the means to work out its intents :
I look from justice thwarted upon earth,
To Justice throned above.

HANNAH.

At last then thou'rt convinced ?

ELLEN.

[*With broken utterance, but gathering hope
as she proceeds.*]

No, not convinced; not quite — not quite — convinced;
He may have enemies,
Traducers, slanderers of his simplest act;
The best are not exempt from calumny!
Thou hast confounded — not convinced me yet :
Thou'lt see . . . I know . . . his manner's light . . . he's gay.
He says a thousand things which are to him
Mere straws, mere feathers of his conversation,
And these, if misinterpreted, might lead . . .
Yes, yes . . . 'tis plain; some word misunderstood,
Some courtly phrase, some passing gallantry,
Which vanity hath construed into love —
Devotion — passion! — No — still, still I trust!
Still in my husband's honour I confide!
I stake my life on that which being *lost*
Leaves life but worthless.

Enter ADOLPHUS, running.

My father's boat is floating by the walls,
May I run to him, mother? — may I? may I?

ELLEN.

To whom, my child?

ADOLPHUS.

My father. — I saw his boat upon the —
 Why do you weep, dear mother? — I'll not go,
 If going makes you weep.

ELLEN.

All is not lost whilst thou art left, my child,
 All is not darkness whilst I see thy face.

[*Kisses him.*]

Oh! fail me not, my heart, but bear me up
 Till he himself his own accuser prove —
 Then break, and give me rest — and give me rest!

[*She sinks into a chair, ADOLPHUS embracing her, HANNAH weeping; scene closes.*]

Chapter IV.

SCENE — *The sea coast; vessel in the distance; sailors carousing on the shore.*

RALPH and STEPHEN coming forward.

STEPHEN.

It seems to me, friend Ralph, that when certain kings and conquerors parcelled out the land, they selected all the best inside-places for themselves, and left poor Jack the outside crust. And hard enough baked it is on this highway to purgatory.

RALPH.

Well, a man's a man, messmate, though his lot be hard and poor.

STEPHEN.

A man's a man! — pooh, pooh, Ralph; thou might'st as well tell me that a coat's a coat! Now a coat is not a coat, but a character. A coat is a sacred thing on a king, honourable on a minister, worshipful on a judge, respected on a gentleman, obnoxious on the needy,

infectious on the beggar, and, after that, a walking disease to the end of the chapter! There is more in a coat, Ralph, than thy five wits can distinguish.

RALPH.

As how, messmate? as how?

STEPHEN.

As how, Ralph? Why, sometimes a coat is not a coat, but a *deception*, when Vanity wears the coat of Philanthropy, Pride that of Humility, Hypocrisy the coat of Sanctity, &c.; or when the lying vagrant slips on the honest sailor's or soldier's coat to gull the unsuspecting villagers of their hard-won coin. Is a coat a coat, *then*, Ralph; or has it a wider name and signification?

RALPH.

No, no, messmate; no land pirates; no false flags; fight the battle of life, but stick to your colours, say I: no lubberly shirking.

STEPHEN.

That's hearty. Well, old sailor, thou must understand that *a coat* in a drawing-room is a very different affair to a coat on a pauper's back; the very sleeves learn their own importance, and may nudge a lady's elbow without being impertinent; the collar knows that it is silk velvet, and stands up for its own consequence; there is not a button-hole but has a silky consciousness of its connexion with buttons of quality. A gentleman's coat may aspire to the *wit* of

lamp-breaking without fear of a jail; but a pauper's coat is presumed to know better, and must take the consequences. A man's a man, indeed! Is dry junk turtle?

RALPH.

This is college learning. See you, now, what it is to be grammatical; there is nothing like grammar. I hold it that grammar is the navigation of language. I could never have sailed through such a yarn as that without stranding; some words are like whirlpools, Stephen — they twist a man round before he knows where he is. Did *you* ever find that, messmate? But it was whispered on board that thou ran from college when a lad; was it there thou picked up this?

STEPHEN.

Picked up this? What *I* see, Ralph, a *mole* might see; what *I* say, a stone might say. Pick it up? any where, every where. Things are known by their properties, Ralph.

RALPH.

What properties, Master Stephen?

STEPHEN.

Don't be such a goose. What properties? Thou wouldst not expect to find plums on a crab-tree?

RALPH.

Not exactly.

STEPHEN.

No; I should think not. Well, then, things are known by their properties: as thus — now place thy thumb on thy forefinger, so — *Wealth is good.*

RALPH.

Wealth is good.

STEPHEN.

The man is rich; *ergo*, the man must be good, and is thus known by his *property*! Now place thy forefinger on thy nose, Ralph; for herein lies the gist of the argument. Poverty is bad.

RALPH.

Very, Master Stephen.

STEPHEN.

Be quiet; poverty is bad — the man is poor; *ergo*, the man must be bad.

RALPH.

No, no; bar hands there, messmate; the doctor is not the physie.

STEPHEN.

But the man's bad that takes the physie, or ought to be; for there is badness within him.

RALPH.

The man — the doctor — that is . . . Come, capsize

your jokes, Master Stephen ; no humming an old sailor.
I say it again, a man's a man.

STEPHEN.

Ay, well, thou mayst say it, Ralph; but canst thou prove it, Ralph? There's the business. Now here is this inglorious rascal, who promised our glorious captain a large sum if he'd consent to smuggle away his wife and child. Is he a man? or art thou a man? or am I a man? to stand by, Ralph, and —

RALPH.

Hush! there be listeners. Prudence!

STEPHEN.

Who cares? I ran off from better things once than I should quit by running away from this: however, they say that the light foam of the sea hardens itself into a shell; mayhap I shall harden in time. But, prudence, as thou sayst, prudence! where didst thou "pick up" that word, Ralph? 'Tis an easy word to learn, but a difficult one to remember. Prudence? Well, come along; prudence is not a bad pilot.

[*Exeunt.*]

Chapter VI.

SCENE — *The interior of an old Indian temple; a single stream of light rests upon a fallen shrine and idol: broken pillars and masonry scattered around.*

Enter DELMONT, musing.

DELMONT.

Is it some cunning coinage of the priest —
 A mere creation for his exorcism?
 Or is there that self-haunting fiend — a conscience?
 I cannot rest; sin is a foe to sleep!
 Yet how to act? —

Give up Olivia?

Sooner give up my life! Away! 'tis weak;
 For ill to think is vile as ill to act.
 The thinker of a wrong needs but the time
 And courage for the act: 'tis cowardice
 Protects his reputation. Conscience? pshaw!
 A priesthood's legacy to timorous minds.
 The wrong I meditate I will perform. [*A pause.*]
 This moral world's full of immoral flaws:

Convicts upon conjecture in the mood ;
 And when the mood is o'er, the veriest knave
 That masks deceit with candour well assumed
 Will win the race 'gainst plodding honesty !
 There's not a house, whoe'er the tenant be,
 But grants me welcome ; though my gallantries
 Are as a common echo to the ear.
 What's venial in a handsome-featured rake
 Is grossness, baseness, in the sallow-checked.
 Scarcely worth, for such a world, to soil my hands
 With vulgar tools, with instruments so mean ;
 But sharp necessity 's not over nice !
 I've seen this smuggling captain on the coast ;
 He sails at midnight ; and, for payment fixed,
 Agrees to follow as I choose to lead.
 There is no time to think ; pause, and the tide
 Slips by. If she consent, why well, 'tis well ;
 If not, 'tis but compelling.

Still he stays,

Though past the hour affixed to meet me here.
 Will he prove false, play me the double knave,
 And sell his hireling conscience o'er again ?

[*Footsteps heard approaching.*]

No ; here he comes.

Ah ! 'tis a woman's step !

[*ELLEN is seen descending the dark and
 broken steps of the Temple.*]

Ellen ? Impossible ! Can she have heard ?
 What demon tempts her here to serve my scheme ?

ELLEN, approaching timidly.

Blame me not, Delmont, that I hither come ;

For there are rumours out against your honour,
Things which must sorely grieve you but to hear,
And which, when heard, must quickly be repugned.

DELMONT.

What is suspected, madam?

ELLEN.

Suspected?

DELMONT.

So; you mislike the term.
Suspicion, madam, owns a many masks;
It rarely leaves its features as they are.
Amongst the rest, 'tis oft its cue to wear
The mask of friendship; seemingly alive
But to one's benefit — yet sooth the while
It hints, and doubts, and fears, all is not well.
Sometimes it steals the very glance of love;
And whilst its *tones* but witness to affection,
Its thoughts are boiling o'er with calumny.
Suspected! what's suspected? Is't not so?
Or "rumours," as you say. What of these "rumours?"

ELLEN.

Oh! calumnies! audacious calumnies!
Such as — that thou . . . I cannot tell thee here.
Let us be gone.

DELMONT, *aside*.

'Tis as I thought — she's heard —
Better to break at once, and know the worst.

ELLEN.

Come, quit this wild and desolate spot,
And when our boy embraces thee at home
(’Tis very long since thou hast seen him, Delmont),
I’ll tell thee all — nothing conceal, dear husband.

DELMONT.

Husband? —
I bade you say what rumours brought you here;
How knew you in this place I might be found? —
Husband?
What proof have ye of that which you assert?
Must I be husband to monotony;
The dull see-saw of matrimonial life,
If life it may be called where life is none?
But listless, vacant dulness, or perchance,
To spur the lazy spirit of the time,
Some everlasting tale of careless varlets.

ELLEN.

Whence comes this sudden unexpected passion?
What have I said — what done, to start this change?

DELMONT, *with increasing vehemence.*

Change?
No: all are changeable but women!
They never change; no, never — they’re immaculate!

ELLEN.

Oh, cruel triumph, first make sad the heart,
And then reproach it for its silentness!
First list indifferently to all that yields,

Or ought to yield, a father's breast delight,
And then, when long neglect hath dulled the sense,
Complain of dulness ! What I have done
Seems barren to your wish ; what left undone,
Is negligence or wrong. Nothing I do,
Or leave undone, is right : would I were dead !

DELMONT.

Mean you your death has ever been my wish ?
Or if you mean not that, what is't you mean,
That you revolt my feelings with such words,
And urge forbearance to the uttermost ?

ELLEN.

You have reviled me — when did I reply ?
You have contemned me — when did I complain ?
Oh, tyranny of temper, that would wound
Even the innocent to screen itself ;
Would rather aggravate a wrong by aid
Of whispered falsehood, counterfeit report,
Or misconception wilfully provoked,
Than own one error, or confess one fault !
Oh, there's more mercy in a wicked act
Than in false tongue ; more, more humanity
In brutes than in man's brutal temper !
When will Oppression cease to wound the weak,
And Power learn mercy ?

DELMONT.

Most excellent !
Practise declaiming now, and you'll be eloquent ;
Correcting others whilst you rail yourself.

But since in one respect we seem agreed,
 Why drag a chain that galls the neck of both?
 Why sharpen discord on the hone of hate?
 Take passage straight for England; and if coin
 Can pay you for obedience, it is yours.
 But go or not, your son to England goes!
 His mind shall not be warped against his sire;
 His hate, at least, shall be a natural growth,
 Not grafted by his mother in revenge.

ELLEN.

Heard I aright? O God, heard I aright?
 My son? thou mean'st it not! Give up my son?
 That which makes life amends for half its woes;
 My only comfort, solace under heaven!
 Oh, fix some bounds to this unnatural hate,
 Some limit to this endless cruelty!
 Have pity on a mother's helplessness!
 Leave me not friendless, childless, husbandless,
 Or — thou mayst have a murder at thy door
 Not long remorse may cleanse!

[*Passing DELMONT, and pacing about
 distractedly.*]

DELMONT, *aside.*

This wretchedness
 Undoes what I would do. Her tears — what then?
 'Tis known that women's tears can find their eyes
 Without their hearts; they weep for anything,
 Or nothing, as their nerves may chance to be
 Or in or out of order, temper, humour.
 A tear is nought but selfishness dissolved;

Self-pride is hurt, and then self-pity weeps !

[*A pause.*]

Must I wait long for your decision, madam ?

I am not used to waver in resolve ;

And that methinks you know. We must be brief.

ELLEN.

Is it a trifling task you give my heart ?

I must have time ; this sudden force may prove

A scheme to hurry me to some misact !

I ask for time to counsel with myself,

For I am in this world without a friend —

It seems as heaven itself abandoned me !

I must have time ! — and time for what ? for thought ?

O God, have pity on my aching brain !

For man hath none ; — I say, I must have time ;

I will have time ; I will not answer now.

DELMONT.

But I am now to act ; therefore conclude,

Either the boy and you together go,

Or he alone !

The vessel sails at night ; when it departs

No other ship may quit the coast for months.

I wait but your decision — ay or no.

ELLEN.

Distract me not ! I wish to do the best

For my poor injured boy — you'll drive me mad !

I cannot act if you do drive me mad !

Not me alone, but you betray your child !

Is he fit quarry for that kite-like heart ?

But Heaven's protracted vengeance yet shall fall :
 The sequel of the wrong you here commit
 Is with a higher power ! Delmont, beware !
 I have a brother ; one whose deep revenge
 Would hunt ye down, were he to chase the world :
 While yet there's time, beware ! — I say, beware !

DELMONT.

You threaten, madam ! — By your own report
 Our lives are not the happiest with each other ;
 No matter whose the fault, so stands the fact :
 England's your native home — I offer wealth
 In England with your son ! Is that so hard ?
 What coin will give content, that coin is yours.

ELLEN.

Content ?
 What mockery ! content ? — oh, Delmont, Delmont !
 What hath content on earth to do with me ?
 Without thy love wealth is but beggary :
 I would have welcomed pain and penury,
 So that they spared me thee — the same thou wert ;
 For thou wert loving once, and good, and generous,
 All that a dotting heart might idolise !
 Think 'tis the morn the priest first joined our hands.

DELMONT, *vehemently*.

I do deny the rite ! You are no wife !

[ELLEN shrieks, and stands transfixed, gazing
 on him. A pause.]

This is but trifling, madam. When the ship-bell tolls
 You must equip yourself within the hour ;

For by the fiend I worship do I swear,
Whether you will or no — come but that hour —
The boy shall sail.

ELLEN.

Oh, monstrous cruelty ! unheard-of perfidy !
False husband, faithless father, perjured friend ;
Yes, burn all record of thy treachery —
All written document of thine offence —
Spurn the high sanctity of holy law,
Apostate both from nature and from God !
Yet, Delmont, from the ashes of my wrong
A spirit yet shall start thou canst not shrive.
Morn, noon, and fearful eve — at home, abroad,
In bed, at board, that voice shall haunt thee still ;
Hear ye it not ? 'tis dooming now thy soul. . . .

[*The ship-bell tolls at a distance — ELLEN hears,
totters towards DELMONT, and, overpowered,
sinks on her knees.*]

DELMONT.

You hear !

ELLEN.

Dread power of heaven, assist me ere I die !
Is there no mercy ?

[*She clings to him, DELMONT throws her off.*]

Mercy ! have mercy !

Do not harm my child — thy child, that loves thee ;
'Thou wouldst not wound all things that seek thy love,
And make him, too, thy victim ? Oh, relent !

[*He turns away.*]

Alas! 'tis vain : no rock so obdurate,
No stone so pitiless as thy resolve !

[DELMONT *endeavours to leave her — she
clings to him.*]

Thou shalt not touch him ; stay, I will consent —
Yield anything ! O God, what have I done
To be so wretched ? None have pity, none !
Not even Heaven hath pity, or its voice
Had surely spoke to thee in thunder now !
O my dear child, my last sole hope and refuge,
Love thy poor mother ! love thy hapless mother !
Comfort her yet in her extremity !
Who for thy sake yields all of life — but thee !
Though houseless, friendless, poor, and desolate,
(For never will we touch one doit of thine,)—
Thou, my wronged boy, wilt love thy mother still !

[DELMONT *still endeavouring to leave her.*]

Thou goest not yet ; no, not one step ; for thou
Wouldst kill him with that look ! — I do consent —
I leave for — England.

[*She faints, and, as DELMONT rushes out, four
sailors enter from the steps of the upper
Temple — DELMONT points to ELLEN. —
Scene closes.*]

Chapter VI.

Six years are supposed to have elapsed since Chap. V.

SCENE — *The Interior of a well-furnished English Cottage; a small table set with a simple evening meal; DOROTHY, very old and deaf, seated by the wood fire; HANNAH, her granddaughter, walking about impatiently; clock strikes eleven; HANNAH listens to the storm which is raging without, and then speaks.*

HANNAH.

STILL he comes not! still, still he comes not!
 How the wind howls, wild as a dying wolf
 Through the black forest! and the heavy rain
 Beats 'gainst the groaning casement dismally:
 How wilt thou struggle with this ruffian blast,
 My poor, lone boy?

Mother, I say — so you
 But get your old warm chair, the lad may die!
 Five times I've braved the tempest, yet in vain;
 Better to see him dead than fear him so!
 Mother, I say, will you not hear, nor speak?

What said Adolphus when he left this morn?
What took he with him? Oh, that you can sit
Tame and unmoved whilst I . . .
Quick, what said he?

DOROTHY, *feebly arousing herself.*

Didst thou speak, daughter?

HANNAH.

Adolphus, mother, what took he forth?
[*Suddenly turning aside a cloak.*]
I do not see his spear: went he with that?

DOROTHY.

Adolphus, dear — hath not the lad returned?

HANNAH.

Thou know'st he hath not: I have sought, talked, raved,
Since nine o' the clock, outwearying the time,
And now thou ask'st me, "Hath he not returned?"
Will — thou should'st ask — will, will he e'er return?

DOROTHY, *with increasing attention.*

'Tis a wild night; but I've heard many such.
The winds blow feebler than in my young days:
Ah! I remember me in fifty-eight,
That was a storm! half Colne made desolate!
We lay upon our faces, and thus low
Awaited death.

HANNAH, *interrupting her.*

Mother, you try all patience: here you speak

Of sixty years ago as yesterday ;
 And things of yesterday, to-day, an hour,
 Nay, of a moment passed, your memory finds not !
 Went he not hunting, mother — tell me that ?
 Oh, heaven, some peril may beset his path,
 And I no help, no help, no help !

*[Covering her face with her hands, and
 sobbing bitterly.]*

DOROTHY,

*[Who rises slowly, and with great difficulty, from
 her chair, approaches her daughter with tot-
 tering steps, in the last weakness of extreme
 old age.]*

Hast thou no Trust ? no Helper ? Go to Him,
 Thou who art heavy laden and oppressed,
 Lay at His feet thy fears. My child, I'm old ;
 Thy mother's mother hath been long on earth
 (Heaven take me in its time !) ; but never yet
 Found she the humble truster in her God
 Forgotten in her need ! Take comfort, daughter :
 He that directs the blind bird's weary flight
 Will light the storm-path of this wandering boy.

*[HANNAH starts up, and again paces backwards
 and forwards to the door, to the window,
 in increasing agitation.]*

HANNAH.

Mother, I cannot pray : my thoughts are wild ;
 I think a thousand evils.

[Pauses, and collects herself to speak calmly.]

He took his spear ?

DOROTHY.

Surely he did.

[HANNAH clasps her hands tightly, as in great inward distress.]

A hundred times before
Thou'st known him take his spear, and cautioned not.
The lad might be thine own, thou frettest so.

HANNAH.

He is my own ; in double love mine own !
Left by his dying mother to my charge :
Poor gentle heart ! deceived and broken heart !
Oh, when at last we lost that Indian coast,
Few words she spoke, and those so wild and weak,
No ear, save Pity's, might comprise their grief !
"Oh, misery !" — and ever night and day
Those words made dry her lips — "oh, misery !" —
And thus she reached our cold, sad English coast ;
And thus, ere forty hours elapsed, she died !
Loving him still who broke her loving heart !
My own ! Oh, yes ; in double love my own !

DOROTHY.

Why wished she that her grave should be unknown
To her poor child ? — that was a hard request ;
Hard and unnatural.

HANNAH.

No, say not hard :
She feared the son might in his mother's wrongs
Forget the sire, and think but of revenge.
"Oh, keep him innocent of all, dear friend ;

“And should his sire repent, then bring them both,
 “And I will speak forgiveness from my grave!
 “I know thy worth; bless thee, thou faithful heart!”
 And thus . . . she died.

DOROTHY.

Well, I am old; belike I am too old,
 And see not this as thou wouldst have me see it:
 I would have shewn the boy her place of rest.
 His little knees beside her lonely grave,
 The prayers poured from his little heart to heaven,
 Had surely made the mother's spirit blest!

HANNAH.

Oh, to have seen her by that vessel's side,
 Gazing her heart out towards that Indian strand,
 And dying inch by inch! I've seen strong men,
 Hard, weather-beaten, reckless, sea-bred men,
 With weeping eyes gaze on her piteous face,
 And curse the cruelty that stabbed her peace!
 When he's away, as now, with chance of ill,
 His mother's look, her heart-worn, weary look,
 Her last beseeching prayer, to watch her child,
 Is with me e'en as then; 'twould drive me mad
 Should aught endanger him. [*Pacing to and fro.*]
 I cannot rest; quiet is torture to me.
 There was that Indian gipsy prowling near,
 That Midgley, as they call her; she who goes
 Idling and pilfering with these forest-men:
 Who knows but she — the witch — may be employed
 To work him evil! 'Twere a deed to suit
 The malice of his vile inhuman sire,

Who, as I hear, is now within the isle.

Alas, my boy! my poor, lost, helpless boy!

Thine only aid a feeble woman's love!

[*A sudden crash of storm without; HANNAH
snatches her cloak and belts it round her.*]

DOROTHY.

Whither now? Thou'rt dreaming, sure?

HANNAH.

Bar close the door, mother; here is wood,

Fuel to keep thee warm. I'll not be long;

Thou need'st not fear . . .

DOROTHY.

Fear? I am too old for fear!

The helplessness of age is its protection.

[*HANNAH opens the door; the storm drives
furiously; she starts back as irresolute; a
distant cry is heard, and she rushes out
despairingly; DOROTHY slowly settles her-
self in her old chair. Scene closes.*]

Chapter VIII.

FALKNER, *the Brother of ELLEN, escaped from India, in pursuit of DELMONT; BERTHA, the Heiress of Indworth Castle, his Betrothed.*

SCENE — *A Library in the Castle of Indworth; FALKNER and BERTHA seated.*

BERTHA.

You over-estimate the chance of fortune!
 What fortune have the birds that sing at morn,
 Filling the grove with music and rejoicement?
 What fortune claim the flowers beyond the soil,
 The little soil wherein they bloom and perish?
 And yet their loveliness pines not more soon
 For their sad lack of fortune. What the trees,
 That lift as proudly to the skies their heads
 As though proclaimed the princes of the land?
 Fortune! — it is a tinsel sound, my Faulkner,
 And, in itself, *itself* of nought assurance,
 Nor love, nor health, nor happiness; for here
 Fortune is born of earth, and clings to clay.
 'Tis a scant tenure — a poor worldly term!
 Love is immortal! happiness, eternal!

FALKNER.

Oh, lovely monitress! 'tis well that truth
 Is in thy breast as beauty on thy brow,
 For the worst counsel would seem best from thee :
 The weakest reason match the wisest ; love.

BERTHA.

The nobly born are not the only noble !
 There is a line more royal, more majestic,
 Than is the sceptred line of mighty crowns ;
 An ancestry so bright with glorious names
 That he, who truly feels himself akin
 To such, may stand before the throne — noble
 Amidst the noblest ; kingly amidst kings !
 He that inherits Honour, Virtue, Truth,
 Springs from a lineage next to the divine ;
 For these were heirs of God ; and we, their heirs,
 Prove nearest God, when we stand next to them !

[*She rises.*]

Man, heir to these is *rich* — and Wealth may bow
 To Greatness it can cherish, — not create !

FALKNER, *rising, and approaching her.*

Thou'rt rich in that which maketh riches poor.
 There is an emanation from thy love
 Which elevates, ennobles, and encharms me ;
 I list thy voice and think thy tongue an angel's !
 Existence hath no light but beams from thee ;
 Present and future have no name but thine,
 Nor mind nor memory ! Oh, my own beloved !
 And yet 'tis madness thus to breathe my soul,
 Thus pour its hidden fulness at thy feet :

For wherefore shouldst thou link thy cloudless fate
 With my, I fear, but evil destiny?
 Better thou badst me quit thy sight for ever
 Than bind thy lot with one so desolate —
 So poor — in all so undeserving thee!
 Better forgetfulness than such remembrance.
 My love is cursed, cursed as the ivy, Bertha,
 Which kills the thing it clings to!

BERTHA.

No, Falkner, no,
 Not desolate — my heart shall be thy home;
 Not poor — I hold my wealth but for thy service;
 Not cursed, my Falkner, no! for I will bless thee.
 Thou knowst not half the love shrined in my heart,
 What it would do, not do, to make thee happy!

[*Pauses, then speaks half reproachfully.*]

Methought thou hadst o'ercome those darker moods
 Which shook thy spirit when I knew thee first,
 And that thy night had found at length love's morn,
 Love's morn of roses — roses whose glad hue
 Seemed as an angel's cheek had pressed them last;
 And now thy thoughts, as they were mourners, sit
 Wailing the death of hope within thy heart.

FALKNER, *startling*.

Death? speak'st thou of death, my Bertha?
 Tell me, my love, believ'st thou aught in omens?

BERTHA.

If they be good, not else.

FALKNER.

Say, didst thou note this morn ?
How beautiful the God of Light awoke,
Rose with surpassing glory ; his bright head
Crowned with immortal rays, that all the East
Lifted its golden voices, and was glad !
Forth beamed the god o'er pearl and purple cloud,
That as enamoured of his presence seemed ;
And Morn, all blushes, spoke her happiness.
Thus looked the time ; when scarce few moments fled,
And lo ! bright Phœbus lay as in a shroud.
Black clouds, like mourners, swept in funeral train,
And Morn, sweet Morn, like a young widow, wept,
Where last the footsteps of her god had passed.

BERTHA.

A weeping dawn oft makes a laughing day ;
Thy feeling seems to feed on things of gloom ;
This is not wise, nor just to Providence :
Call Fancy to bring forth her brighter hues,
Walk on the golden-sanded shores of Hope !
Strike thy false prophet from his temple down,
And set up Truth, heart-smiling Truth, instead.
Omens ? I'll conjure twenty, have but patience.

Listen :

I had a bird, a little graceful bird,
Its cage was like a fairy palace stored,
But still it seemed unhappy ; still its beak
Beat 'gainst the glittering wires impatiently,
And all its love — for much it seemed to love me —
Could not restrain its spirit from the air,
The sunny, happy air of liberty.

Though hard to part with my then sole companion,
I took the discontented from its perch,
Kissed its cold, glossy beak and bade it go. [*Pauses.*]
You listen, love?

FALKNER.

I do; 'twas like yourself!

BERTHA.

Next morn a tapping at my casement brought!
It was my bird, and in its beak a flower —
A memory of the meadows wandered o'er;
The next day, and the next, some token still!
At last a purple feather at my foot
The fond bird dropped; a little moment perched
Within its cage! — a moment looked around,
And then away, ne'er to return again!
Some love-mate in the woods awaited it,
And in its happy nest it soon forgot
The empty cage o'er which its mistress wept!
An omen, say'st thou? oh, for *cage*, read *heart*,
And thou'st an omen of forsaken love;
Loving that one who better loves another;
Sowing afflictions whose sad fruit is tears!
Yet hast thou vowed thou loved not one save me;
Nor cousin, sister — no? is it not no?

FALKNER.

Nor sister? thou shalt hear.
I dreamt I had a sister graced as thou;
As beautiful, yet different in her beauty;
For she was like the twilight, soft and dark,

Thou, like the morning, dewy-eyed and fair;
And, as within thy lap my glad cheek lay,
Methought she came and blessed us.

Suddenly,

As though a cloud had swept across the sun,
She looked a corpse! a halo circled her,
And in that light thy face grew cold and fixed!
I turned; beneath my foot the firm earth fell
As in convulsion; with it down I sank,
Thou shrieking for that help which none might give.

BERTHA.

Did I not leap the chasm to thy side?
No? . . .
Then 'twas indeed a dream, an idle dream;
No image of our lot; no omen, love!
Which still had held more probability
Than I should live, and yet behold thee die!

FALKNER.

Is then thy love so deep?

BERTHA.

It is! it is!

I think time lost that is not found with thee;
Time nothing worth but thus to sit with thee,
To hear thy manly spirit thus discourse,
Speak with an eloquence to capture time,
And make love hang enraptured on thy words.
I've lived alone — much, very much alone —
And long before I knew thee I had formed,
In the romance of my young girlish heart,

A being like thee — speaking, looking, like thee !
 But, oh, I am too bold to tell thee this !
 'Tis wrong ; it had appeared more maidenly
 To have concealed, not to have let thee know,
 To —
 I blush to think how weak I must appear.

FALKNER.

My faithful love, my bride, my now soon wife !
 And when thou bear'st my name, my Bertha,
 We will away to climes where love may smile,
 And make our home in some new paradise,
 Which Nature, liberal mother, hath endowed
 With loveliness beyond a season's bloom,
 Where never memory shall in sables come,
 But thou be my presiding deity ;
 And we will love as we had but one heart,
 One mind, one hope, one joy, one happiness !
 Shall it be so ?

BERTHA.

Even as thou wilt :

What is thy wish is mine ; what way suits thee
 That way would I still go : thy home still mine.
 For, oh, my Falkner,
 Affections never die ; when life is o'er,
 They take the wings of a diviner world,
 And grow immortal !

FALKNER.

My own beloved !
 Why speak so sweet, and yet so mournfully ?

BERTHA.

It was the echo of thine own dear voice,
Which evermore is sad ; as though it pined
For nobler realms, for beings loftier,
Where every tone was eloquent of God !
Come ! I have flowers to shew will make thee glad :
Thy gift of plants, they wear their choicest bloom ;
I, who believe not in distracting omens,
Have faith in flowers and their inspiring looks ;
Come, nay, I *will* — mark you that rebel word —
I will not have thee sad !

[*Exeunt, she endeavouring to cheer FALKNER,
who smiles, and leads her out affectionately.*]

Chapter VIII.

TIME — *Early dawn.* SCENE — *A deep hollow in the wilds of the forest.*

DELMONT, now LORD KELFORD, (*having succeeded to the title and estates of a distant relative,*) discovered seated upon the fallen trunk of a tree.

KELFORD.

Now once again in England, that wise land
Where wives are masters! Give me Indian wives;
I find no taste for female government,
Nor vote for parliament in petticoats!
Yet British power was ever feminine,
Or how came Woman first to rule the waves?
No matter; men are most ingenious
In forging weights for their own backs to carry.
One weight the less my own broad shoulder bears:
Olivia's dead! Consumption, as they say —
And they are wise in their own eyes that say it!
So let it pass. Consumption be it then;
She's dead, poor girl! and from her quiet rest

Ellen no more can wake to thwart my will.
 Some men might deem themselves unfortunate,—
 Two wives — both beautiful — and buried both !
 But mourning is the lot of human kind,
 And resignation comes when needed most.
 'Tis wonderful how much I seem resigned !
 Yet more resigned, if one existing now
 Slept with his mother : were his head with hers,
 Marriage with Bertha might be feasible ;
 But whilst he breathes, he is the living key
 To what the world might term an ugly story.
 But yester eve I marked one in these woods —
 One whom I knew abroad in earlier times,
 A fellow branded for some petty crime,
 And afterwards a smuggler on the coast ;
 One, as I deem, well fitted to perform
 This act, on which I build security.
 And to my wish he comes.

[*Looking down an avenue of the wood.*]

A precious rogue,
 If mind but match with look ; a prettier knave
 I would not wish to gain in Christendom.

[*WOLFBANE enters, and crosses Kelford.*]

Hov now, old friend ! passing without a word ?
 'Tis not so lately that we met, that thou
 Shouldst shun my greeting.

WOLFBANE, *examining Kelford.*

I know you not.

KELFORD.

No? Let me see ! 'tis ten — nay more than ten, —

'Tis thirteen years, old woodsman, is it not,
Since thou and I first met?

WOLFBANE.

You are deceived; I am not of this clime,
Nor half ten years in England.

KELFORD.

What?

Nor at Thiagam? [WOLFBANE *starts*.]

Come, your hand. [*He gives his left hand reluctantly.*]

Not this! not this! the one I'd wish to shake

Is that on which was seared a felon-brand.

[*Snatching his right hand.*]

Ay, here it is; fresh as 'twere newly grilled!

WOLFBANE.

The brand?

Curses upon thee that thou shak'st me thus!

The brand! and wherefore branded? Knowing me,

Thou shouldst know that; knowing not that,

Thou knowest nought of me.

Say, for what crime

That horrid iron quivered to the bone?

Whom had I robbed? what mortal being injured?

'Twas sworn I cultivated evil arts

To work my neighbours harm! that by my spells

Cattle had died, and blight devoured the grain;

Know thou, unless some tyrant, like the rest,

Not Art, but Ignorance, is full of blight!

Not Art, but Bigotry, is full of death!

Error is ever obstinate ; and man —

[*Suddenly pausing, and suppressing his passion.*]

But to the purpose. Sir, I studied science ;
Gave years, long years, my best of life, to thought ;
My days and nights to bold experiments.
And for results, which should have won me fame,
They gave “hard labour and imprisonment ;”
For theories, for such discoveries
As might have gained me honour, they conferred
The brand !

KELFORD.

And thank thy lenient judges thou wert not
Chained to the stake, and forthwith burnt alive !

WOLFBANE.

Thanks ?
May curses thick as mildew wither them !

KELFORD.

They'll wither without curses ; — but enough.
Why sought ye not for counsel ?

WOLFBANE.

I was poor.

KELFORD.

Or friend, who would have cleared your character ?

WOLFBANE.

I was unfortunate :
Poverty and misfortune have no friends.

And what knew they of Indian mysteries?
 I tell thee, by a law as clearly shewn
 As that which governs worlds — as that which wheels
 The everlasting planets in their course —
 I could in few brief moments fix thee there,
 Helpless as marble, not a limb could move!
 No, not a nerve within thy frame relax
 Until my breath unlocked it!

This, men say,
 Is magic, madness, or some devilish lore,
 Bought at the price of man's immortal soul!
 Dolts!
 Science hath marvels which earth's counsellors
 Dare not believe for fear, nor see for pride!

KELFORD, *sneeringly*.
 Think of the gratitude of future ages:
 The monuments to Genius; think of Fame!
 Think all well lost so that thou win the World!

WOLFBANE.
 The World?
 What recks the World so that the World's amused?
 My branding was a public holiday!
 The World? who were its benefactors, say?
 And what their recompense? The historic page
 Crimsons with shame to show it!
 Not all the tears which human eyes have shed
 Can wash the World of its ingratitude!
 Florence rewarded Galileo's truth,
 With what? with persecution, bondage, hate,
 Charges of heresy and guilt. 'Tis true

They did not brand him ; that reward was left
For later times and meaner advocates.

KELFORD.

But of your present practice, what say men ?
'Tis witchcraft yet, if rumour lies not still.

WOLFBANE.

What could I do ?
Debarred all natural refuge — those respects
Which make the social happiness of life —
Loving mankind, yet of mankind an outcast ;
What could I do ? What roof was for the houseless ?
Starved, hooted, branded, was I driven at last
To herd with these, a gang of gipsy-vagrants ;
Men who with trembling souls beheld my power,
And straight resolved obedience : here I live —
These forest wilds my home.
Would men were more alike, and loved their like.

KELFORD.

Men more alike !
Each leaf of the same tree is not exact ;
Each grain of the same dust in something varies ;
Even in eggs there is a difference !
Some fresh and youthful, clear and tender skinned,
Others opake, and of a coarser germ ;
Some of a shell that's difficult to break,
And oft, when broken, prove not worth the pains.
Some of no flavour save a musty one,
Like a bad temper quick to give offence ;
Some fair outside but rotten at the yolk !

Others a little cracked ; [*Gibingly at WOLFBANE.*]
 And addled some !
 Zounds, wouldst thou have less difference in a man
 Than in an egg ?

WOLFBANE.

No :
 Would to heaven that easily as an egg
 We could hold man between us and the light,
 Test by a taper thus his hidden heart,
 And learn its soundness !
 [*KELFORD laughs sneeringly.*]
 Now for yourself :

What seek you, that you crossed my footpath now,
 And urged acquaintance on me ?

KELFORD.

Seek ?

WOLFBANE.

Men of your caste seek rarely friends from ours,
 Unless good service may be wrung from them.

KELFORD.

'Tis shrewdly guessed ; and to be candid now —
 For I've especial reverence for candour —
 There is a youth, I fain were any where
 But where he is ! If thou canst snare him hence,
 Thy payment shall exceed thy trouble's worth
 By some few ducats. If the lad resist,
 (Though I would have thee tender of his health,)
 Yet in a fray oft-times a casual blow

May knock the life out; and in such event,
 Thy risk being great, the greater thy reward !
 Hark, in thine ear — the fifties shall be hundreds.
 Lodge him but where, for some few years to come,
 His face may never greet my sight again,
 And name a recompense to please thyself :
 But lodge him where he'll trouble earth no more,
 And — but I trust thou comprehendst me well —
 I would not for the world thou judg'st so ill
 As think I'd counsel violence.

WOLFBANE.

'Tis clear :

Some accidents are fatal ; and a blow
 Given in a brawl's a thing of common course,
 And wins but common notice. . . .

KELFORD.

There ! there thou hast it :
 What sayst thou — thy reward ? . . .

WOLFBANE.

Our gang shall track him out, be thou assured. —
 Better beneath my care than where he is ! [*Aside.*]

KELFORD.

Then forth with me : I'll give thee such description
 As to his capture suddenly may lead.
 Cowards keep poor ; 'tis better than philosophy
 To win a life's reward by one hour's service :
 The stone thou break'st his head with will eclipse
 The golden stone of old philosophy. [*Exeunt.*]

[As they retire ADOLPHUS is seen descending a rocky and mountainous height of the forest : he descends clinging to the fir-trees, slowly and with difficulty, his spear broken.]

ADOLPHUS, leaping to the ground.

I think the deuce is in my feet for rambling ;
 I ever was a Rambler from a child :
 Shew me a boat, and straightway I must sail —
 A spear, and I must hunt ! set me 'mid flowers,
 And I must off to share them with some child,
 A Rambler like myself ! You might as soon
 Attempt to stay the sunbeam, that disports
 O'er hill and forest, lake and valley side,
 As seek to settle me.
 Shut doors, and there are windows : fasten both,
 'Tis all the same ; for ramble out I must !
 'Tis the perpetual motion of the mind,
 An impulse of the blood, and which, in sooth,
 Make bones and body often pay for it !

[Looking at his spear-staff.]

Thou traitor staff, to fail thy master thus :
 Call'st thou this service — just when needed most,
 To split upon thy master ? Out upon thee !
 Thy mother tree believed thee better branch
 Of her good honest root.

So, here am I.

Bewildered in the forest, and, what's more,
 In that wild skirt which bears an evil fame.
 Yet what care I ? Evil can touch me not !
 I wear a sacred charm upon my breast,
 Left with a mother's blessing ; her last gift !

Which, like some heavenly spirit breathing hope,
And confidence, and love, I wear about me.
Now, once again to try my fortune : If the staff
Had shewn a British heart, of native firmness,
I had found home despite this wild, blind dawn !

[*Sudden rush of storm and lightning.*]

Methought the winds had stormed till out of breath,
And we'd had peace for lack of lungs to rail !
My poor old nurse ! how the good dame will fret,
And waste her love with watching !

Ah, a light !

One of those false misleading fires — there 're many such,
And many human staffs that fail their trust
As thou hast done, thou most unworthy servant :
See thou protect'st thy master's head at least
Some little better than his wearied feet.
Light still ! and voices too !

What, ho ! help, friends !

[*Exit, calling.*]

Chapter IX.

SCENE — *A deep hollow in the wilds of the forest ; Witches carousing ;* MIDGLEY, TOADFOOT, NIGHTSHADE, RAT-STAR, *and others.*

Chorus of Witches.

Where unholy tempests blow,
 Welcome fox and carrion-crow,
 Wizard-bat, and goblin owl,
 Ghosts and shapes that nightly prow,
 Venomed snake and slimy toad,
 Sights that hint of hell's abode ;
 Welcome brinded cat and grey,
 'Tis the Witches' holyday !

Prickly branch and thorny weed,
 Things on human pain that feed ;
 Meteors gleaming to betray,
 False and foul make holiday !
 Plank, that on the treacherous wave
 Mocked the clinging to their grave,
 Welcome with thy ghostly prey,
 'Tis the Witches' holyday !

Vapours of infernal dew,
 Stars ambition overthrew,
 Secret fires that inly slay,
 Waste and Want make holyday !
 Welcome Sea, thou life ensnaring ;
 Welcome Earth, with thy despairing ;
 Welcome Winds, on wrecks that prey ;
 'Tis the Witches holyday !

MIDGLEY *speaks*.

'Twas a night to make fiends quail,
 Rain and lightning, wind and hail ;
 Shrieks and storms, and shuddering voices,
 Death-like groans that hell rejoices :
 In the caldron of the dark
 Something brewing : we must hark !
 There will be a deed ere long,
 Or these portents use false tongue !

TOADFOOT.

There will be a *deed of sin* !
 On the cloud, without, within,
This was writ in lines of blood,
 Which the storm-fiends understood.

WOLFBANE, *sings without*.

The midnight is yelling,
 The demons' flight telling ;
 The witch-fire is blazing,
 The evil-eye gazing :

Come in !

The wild hags are trooping
 With howling and whooping,
 With cursing and driving
 The red air is writhing,

Like sin !

Branch, hedge-stick, and broom,
 Seem alive in the gloom ;
 Like foes that have striven,
 The black clouds are driven

Amain ;

Whilst rising and rounding,
 Description confounding,
 Speeds on the wild rout
 With blind havock and shout

In their train !

The mountains are gliding,
 The giant-cragg riding,
 The forest is crashing,
 The mad ocean dashing —

So, ho !

As a drunkard returning,
 The old earth is whirling ;
 While thunder-rain quaffing,
 With haggard fiends laughing

We go !

Enter WOLFBAE.

TOADFOOT.

Joy, Wolfbae ; joy !
 The *spell* hath sped !

The *curse* hath stood !

The sword is bright
That ere the night
Shall quiver red
 With blood !

WOLFBANE.

Mount thee, Toadfoot ; climb the air ;
Scatter guilty passions there :
Bid them fall on human sight
With a pressure and a blight !
Sting the brain and sear the eyes,
Bid betraying phantoms rise :
Let *his* reason quit control —
Loose revenge upon his soul !
O'er his dark and destined head
Hang the spell with murder red !

ADOLPHUS, *without*.

What, ho ! help, friends !

WOLFBANE.

Footsteps on the forest-dew,
Young, yet not to sorrow new ;
Yet that hot and hurrying tread
Could it but awake the Dead,
Rouse the guilty from his bed,
It might start a tale of sin
Fit for fiends to revel in !
Swift he comes ! but when away —
Dawn ! what hath thy book to say ?
 [*Examining the heavens.*]

Crimson is the house of Life,
Accident with Fate at strife,
Whilst Revenge half hides the knife!

Enter ADOLPHUS.

[Confused gibbering of Witches.]

WOLFBANE.

Welcome lost one! thou art mine!
Hang on air the mystic sign.

*[A light is flung upon the air; it floats;
then appears to fall, but suddenly
changes, and soars out of sight.]*

Boy, a guarded life is thine;
Fear not, thou hast nought to fear;
Welcome to the Witches' cheer!

MIDGLEY.

Wolfbane, lend the boy to me;
I will tend him warily!

ADOLPHUS.

Stay!

Tell me what these sights may mean.

WOLFBANE.

Gaze, but speak not, till the scene
Pass as it had never been!

*[WOLFBANE waves his wand: a magical
scene opens: with wild dance of
Witches.]*

WOLFBANE *sings*.

Come ! hither come !

Come near, come far ;

Ye that with the falling star
Speed destruction, hither come !

Ever first and ever last —

Advance !

To the thunder-drum
Of the stormy blast

We dance !

Ha ! ha ! for the wild witch-dance !

Guilt gives the key

To misery ;

And soon we'll see

The gibbet-tree,

And round the Dead we'll dance !

Ha ! ha !

Ha ! ha ! for the wild witch-dance !

[*Chorus and revel of Witches ; ADOLPHUS
swung from one to another into the
centre ring, with MIDGLEY, NIGHT-
SHADE, and WOLFBANE. Scene closes.*]

Chapter X.

SCENE — *A romantic view of lake and mountain ; FALKNER, musing and solitary, discovered leaning against a rock which fences the lake : he speaks.*

FALKNER.

HEAR me, Eternal Justice, in whose hand
 Are grasped the judgments of impartial Truth !
 Thee I invoke ! To thee I lift my voice,
 Thought, feeling, all that may denote a man,
 Once the proud heir of a most honoured name ;
 The brother of a true and virtuous maid,
 Who in all gentler offices evinced
 The sweet perfection of a sister's love !
 Thee I invoke ! Here as bereft I stand,
 Bankrupt of spirit, heart and home insolvent,
 Weigh my unbalanced wrong, and sentence give ;
 Set me this knave but once within my grasp,
 Let me straight wash dishonour from my blood,
 Or bid me think thou, Justice, art no more —
 Truth, Equity, but dreams that cheat the heart
 With hopes that lack results —

Shadows that shape

The grandeur of a Judgment absolute,
Yet, when approached, dissolve in painted air,
Leaving us nought of Virtue but the show,
Lending us nought of Justice but the name !

Enter JURUS.

JURUS.

There he broods again, ever lamenting :
I knew him last a soldier, high in honour,
Lofty in spirit, jealous of a look,
With form and face to win all hearts' regard.
I find him lacking of his olden spirit,
Mysterious, courting solitude ; heedless of that
Which was his pride before — *Society !*
I'll e'en accost him, take it as he will.

[*Approaching FALKNER.*]

What now, my Falkner ? evermore alone ?
Feeding green fancy with forbidden fruit ?
But that thy cheek seems thinner than becoming,
I'd guess some maiden thus bewildered thee.

FALKNER.

A truce, my friend — jest not with misery !

JURUS.

Am I a friend ?

FALKNER.

None better 'neath the sun.

JURUS.

Then thou defraud'st thy friend of his right due :
Friend to thy tongue — a stranger to thy thought ;
Friend to thine ear — an alien to thine heart ;
Friend but in name — not trusted heart and thought !

FALKNER.

Why thus entreat me to thine own discomfort ?
Be satisfied ; I love thy peace too well
To hearken thy request.

JURUS.

Why this attire ?
No new misfortune to the multitude
My friend seems born to suffer ?

FALKNER.

No more a soldier, Jurus ; but teacher, scribe,
Preceptor, secretary, — what you will —
In the castle hard by.

JURUS.

Of the fair Lady Bertha ?
Preceptor, sayst thou ?
P'faith a pupil of so graced a spirit,
So beautiful withal, that even I,
The proud magician, as the peasants style me,
Would change my place for thine.

FALKNER.

Magician, Jurus ? still for mystic lore ?
Still wearying the stars to counsel thee ?
Still building thy foundation upon clouds ?

JURUS.

What men do otherwise than build on clouds?

FALKNER.

Thy new astrology may serve a friend :
Hast thou no sign to track a villain's haunts ?
Doth sin leave no impurity on air,
Predictive of its whereabouts ? If not,
Thy boasted science, comrade, is not worth
The instinct of a dog.

JURUS.

Wrong not science !

Doubt not thy friend ; nor thine own mind abuse :
What knave doth this world hide that thou wouldst find ?
And wherefore ?

FALKNER.

A villain . . . and yet why make sick thy heart
With misery of mine ? *[Pauses, agitated.]*

JURUS.

So moved, my friend :

Come, let us be again as college youths ;
Pour all thy thoughts into as true a breast,
As faithful to thine honour, as of yore.

FALKNER.

My sister, Jurus —
My idolised, my most beloved sister,
My only one — we two were all in all ;
Sole children of our house : shared the same hopes ;

At the same knee breathed the same prayer together ;
 Read the same books ; admired the self-same walks ;
 She gathered flowers for me, and I for her ;
 Our joys were one ; and 'twas a rivalry
 Which could most love the other !

Pardon me —

Those were sweet times, my Jurus, when her face,
 Her young, her innocent, and blooming face,
 Peeped at my study-window, and, with smiles,
 Called me from books to Nature's eloquence ;
 Those were dear hours, had I but known their worth.

JURUS.

Thy sister? Is she, then, dead?

FALKNER.

Murdered ! and by the cruellest of blows
 Which strikes at life through reputation, Jurus.
 Yet she was pure, — oh, most assuredly pure !
 Angels might call her sister — and do now,
 Do even now — in heaven.

JURUS.

I have no words — amazement holds me mute.

FALKNER.

I was a captive, chained in Hyder's cell,
 When first there came some whisper of dishonour ;
 Some slander coupled with my sister's name !
 Heavens, how I chafed ! how cursed the dungeon-chain
 Which stopped both ascertainment and revenge !

[*Walks to and fro, agitated.*]

From hints mysterious, and half utterance,
The whisper grew and grew (among the prisoners
Who'd information from the garrison);
The whisper grew from hint and doubt to surety!
Then each particular step of this dark act:
A villain had beguiled her innocence,
Her artless unsuspecting of deceit,
With a false marriage!

Infamous defraud,
Which calls on God to witness perjury!

JURUS.

The marriage then . . .

FALKNER.

Was false! utterly false!
The priest some tool — some miscreant of his own!
The witnesses his vassals! all a lie!
Got up to wound the dove which sought his breast;
The innocent wife to brand with infamy!
O God, my Jurs, can such monsters sleep?
If sleep, not dream? if dream, what horrors then
Must conscience conjure up to blast their sight —
Horrors to which death were mercy!

JURUS.

Thy noble sister! and was this her fate?
She whose excelling beauty shed a charm
Where'er she moved; so full of elegance,
That but to see her left remembered grace
For after-thought to muse upon: and . . .

FALKNER.

And so loving, Jurus, oh, so loving;
So rich in every gentle excellence,
That it would make one weep — yea, weep — to think
Of love so pure and man so merciless!
Weep — but not tears, not tears!

Tears were not made

To wash out infamy! [*Dashing aside his grief.*]

Oh, what a voice is lost!

'Twas linked to music once, but now to madness!
But she — in her dead beauty — is a shrine
Where every day and every hour my thoughts
Do offer mournful tribute for her loss!

JURUS.

But his name! thou gav'st me not his name.

FALKNER, *to himself.*

Still in thy time, Eternal Retribution —
In thy good time!

JURUS.

Give me his name, that I may learn to curse it!

FALKNER.

Del — , the villain's name is hateful to my tongue.
Delmont. Though I have vainly asked, and sought
To find him by that name.

JURUS.

Delmont!

Why, he is heir of old Glenmorency:

Lord Kelford his new title. If 'tis he,
One more abandoned ne'er disgraced a lineage.
I bid thee spare him not; 'twere well the world
Were rid of such a monster.

FALKNER.

Kelford! not Delmont?
So, 'twas thus I missed him!

JURUS.

He dwells but few miles hence,
Within the mountain fastness.

FALKNER.

So near? — so near? — thank God;
I mark it well.

JURUS.

What sayst thou?

FALKNER, *to himself*.

Kelford? How my hand clutches,
As though the air held daggers for me!

JURUS.

Falkner, art thou possessed? beware, thy face
Betrays unhallowed purpose; meet him still
As foe to foe, no daggers in the dark!

FALKNER, *with difficulty restraining his passion*.

I feel my hand upon his throat:
Methinks I shriek in his perfidious ears,

Kelford ! Lord Kelford ! 'tis a Falkner strikes !
 A brother's vengeance clears a sister's wrongs !
 I have him now — at last — within my reach —
 My rage — at last ! this moment pays for years,
 Of wild, unprofitable, wearying search !
 Kelford ? You're sure his name is Kelford ?

JURUS.

Lord Kelford is his name.

FALKNER.

I shall not soon forget it, trust me, Jurus !
 'Twould make my sword eat through its very sheath —
 A spell to conjure murder !

JURUS.

Murder ? calm thy thoughts ;
 Season all things with caution — see the man !
 This is no debt for hasty settlement ;
 Though profligate, he yet hath power and rank !

FALKNER.

Rank ? Tell me what is rank ? Unless the man
 Match with his station, title but degrades,
 Contrasting its ascendancy with that
 Which is below the common altitude !
 As sunbeams gild a puddle but to shew
 How mean a thing may glitter for a time !
 His rank ? assuredly I'll mind his rank ;
 Shew me the track.

JURUS.

His very castle, if thou wilt.

FALKNER.

Ha! ha! thanks Jurus — five years are shaken

As so much dust from off my eager feet!

I am a youth again — he lives — he lives!

'Twere worth a thousand lives to know he lives!

And I may yet avenge!

[*Exit hastily, JURUS following.*]

Chapter XII.

SCENE — *Interior of the cottage ; the last crimson ray of the setting sun streaming through the narrow casement ; DOROTHY asleep on a low couch ; HANNAH watching.*

HANNAH.

THERE is no hope —
 The hunters tell me he would cross the ridge,
 That savage ridge which slopes to the ravine :
 That narrow, winding, and precipitous ridge :
 Despite their counsel and experience — go,
 Trusting existence to the merest chance,
 The hazard of a step, which, missed, is death !
 'Twas late, he said : others had tried the pass,
 And so would he : 'twould save him miles !
 How oft a life's been lost to save a mile,
 Perchance a moment only : on they rush —
 The car o'ertakes them, or the branch betrays,
 And men lift up a cripple or a corpse !

[DOROTHY moves on the couch.]

Are you not easy, mother? [A pause.]

She sleeps : 'twas but the hand that slipped aside ;

Yet like I not this sleep ; it is too calm :

There's something fearful in its silentness !
The thin lips yield their breath — but oh, so slight,
It stirs not the grey hair that loosely hangs
O'er that spare cheek and lean discoloured neck.
Again she moves ; it is an awful sight !

[DOROTHY awakes, and endeavours to rise ;
HANNAH assists, and props her up with
pillows ; speaking kindly.]

Feel you still that pain ?
It strained you sorely whilst it lasted, mother.
But you've slept well.

DOROTHY.

I shall sleep better soon.

HANNAH.

God grant it. It is hard to see you pained !
Sharp as it is, sooner a thousand times
I'd bear the pang myself, than see you pained :
That's well — you're better now ?

DOROTHY.

Soon — I shall be better soon :
The grave hath called — I heard its voice in sleep ;
The fourscore years and ten of my poor life
Hath one step more to make, and that's the grave !
This heart seems tired of beating ; scared with age,
Death will be rest to it, and peace to me.

HANNAH.

Your dream hath left you sad — I'll bring you food ;
'Twill chase these thoughts, which oft attend the sick.

DOROTHY.

True ; kindly meant, and more than kindly said :
But never more shall I taste human food.
God bless thee, daughter of my own loved child !
Good as she was to me, she left her heart,
And all its goodness too, within thy breast
When she died, leaving thee :

'Twas a blest hour

That brought thee safe from India !

India ? *[Suddenly raising herself, and searching
anxiously round the cottage.]*

The boy ? Is he not found ? Speak — quick !

Adolphus — where is he ?

HANNAH.

He knows Who all things knows,—none else, none else.

DOROTHY.

And sought'st thou not His aid ?

[HANNAH is silent.]

That was a fault my child, a grievous fault :

These old and weary eyes are soon to close,

Yet ere they lose God's blessed light — let them

See thine look up to Him.

HANNAH.

'Tis useless, mother, useless — he is dead !

DOROTHY, *rising slowly but resolutely, until she sits
at her full height.*

'Tis my command — the last that I shall make !

Thou'st knelt beside my knee a little child ;

I charge thee kneel there now, even at my knee!

[HANNAH, *subdued and sorrowful, obeys her meekly. DOROTHY folds her daughter's hands in hers, and lifts them heavenward.*]

God, hear our prayer! Protect this wand'ring boy!

All strength but Thine is weakness: hear us Thou.

Our trust is still in Thee! Great help of hearts!

Our trust — is still — in — Thee! —

[DOROTHY *falls back, and dies*; MIDGLEY, *who is watching through the casement, starts back as she witnesses the death of DOROTHY*; then *approaches once more, and cautiously opens the casement.*]

MIDGLEY.

Peace to this roof!

HANNAH.

Away, deceitful hag!

My sorrow needs no filling up of thine!

Mother and son both gone — both lost — both dead.

MIDGLEY.

Nor lost — nor dead: thy son, Adolphus, lives.

HANNAH.

Thou'rt human, sure?

Thou could'st not be so hard, unfeeling, vile,

As mock me in an hour so dread as this,

And trifle with affliction deep as mine?

MIDGLEY.

Adolphus lives!

HANNAH.

Why comes he not? He could not better come
Than now; I have most need of comfort now!

MIDGLEY.

I cannot stay; 'twere dangerous to stay!
I mean thee well, have always meant thee well,
Despite thy doubts, and sneers, and usages:
In future think a dark and hag-like face
May hide a heart as fair as those who boast
The outward 'vantage of a fairer cheek.
Thy boy is safe!
But come he may not yet. Meet me beside
The bridge, beyond the chasm in the wood:
Believe he's safe: let that suffice to night.

[MIDGLEY *hastens from the casement.*]

HANNAH.

It shall! — it shall!

[*A pause.*]

How strange a thing is death! though deaf for years,
Yet seemed she to detect the slightest sound
For hours before she died! What can it be
Which in its visitation thus dissolves
The impediment of years? I know not:
This — this I know, that I will straight o'ercome
My heat of temper: many a hasty word
Have I addressed 'gainst thee; but I repent, —
Repent, and ask thee pardon on my knees;
Lifeless as thou liest there; pardon, pale corpse!
That I so often have offended thee.

Thy dying lesson, mother, is not lost !

'Tis His own work ! My trust is now in Him !

[HANNAH *bends weeping over the body of DOROTHY.* *Scene closes.*]

Chapter XIII.

SCENE — *A sumptuous apartment in Kelford Castle :*

KELFORD, *attired in a loose flowing robe, lounging upon a sofa ; around appear marble busts and statues from the antique : Indian curiosities, vases of flowers, books, and music, adorn the tables : the whole apartment exhibiting an air of extreme luxury and refinement : he speaks.*

KELFORD.

THIS Clorio frets me — she's too loving far ;
 Her feelings overstep her boy's disguise :
 She's ever on the latch of a discovery,
 Which made, would bring love's bankrupt stock to sale !
 Then for a catalogue of damaged vows —
 Words of an hour, engraved on adamant ;
 And whisper'd nonsense, echoed thunder-loud !
 Indeed she had outwearied me, and long,
 But for her cheerful nature, which still smiles
 'Mid falling tears, as moonlight 'midst the dew.
 She is a riddle even to herself :
 One moment pensive — next, as whimsical !
 Would try temptation to the uttermost,

And still keep virtuous on the brink of vice.
 She's one most like to choose some desperate act,
 Were I not cautious; and this frets me. Frets?
 They'd need have patience who live much with women.
 Her tongue! 'tis too o'er-ripe a page's tongue;
 That tongue which, like a silver bell, rings on
 O'er much, methinks, on one particular note.
 Marriage, forsooth! As though the Lord of Kelford
 Should mate him with . . .

But here she comes.

CLORIO sings without.

With the solitude of ages,
 In the hoary woods sublime,
 Hung two vast and glorious cages,
 Which belonged to Time.
 Songs from one came sweet and pleasant,
 From the other hope seem'd cast.
 The merry bird was called the Present,
 The melancholy bird the Past.

[Enter CLORIO, singing, with lute and flowers.]

Time, I saw, was feeding ever
 His sweet favourite from his store;
 But the Past he came to never,
 Though she'd been his joy before!
 Still the Past would give its warning,
 "Not so long wilt thou be dear."
 Though the bird sang night and morning.
 Never would the Present hear!

[Repeats slowly and impressively.]

Never would the Present hear!

*[Sighs, then suddenly changes to a
light and lively air.]*

From the fields, from the fields,
I have gather'd fresh flowers,
The sweetest and rarest
That grace summer hours :
I've roses, wild roses,
Which beam in their light,
Like the lips of a beauty,
All balmy and bright !

From the woods, from the woods,
Where the bird-songs are gay,
And where young lovers walk
In the clear moon ray :
I have flowers of all hues,
Like a rich sun-set sky,
Gold, purple, and crimson —
Oh, come, come and buy !

See here, my lord :
The flowers are Flora's library, and mine.
See here's the gorgeous poppy; did you know
This proud flower wears a crown? by bards untold.
But in its bloom the crown is at its heart —
In seed, upon its head. The crownèd poppy !
Come, offer homage at its coronation !
And here's that gem, the lily of the vale !
What strange disparity appears betwixt
The fairy flower and its gigantic leaf !
Like Love upon the lap of Hercules,
Hiding her beauty on his ample breast,

Content to be unseen by all save him !
Nature plays freaks in floral marriages
Almost as strange as man oft plays in his.
But you are weary ?

KELFORD.

No ; you make me think,
And thought is silent : listeners should be mute.

CLORIO.

I always fancy silence a rebuke.
Nothing to hear, leaves nothing to reply.
Say something, if 'tis only to find fault.
Now, here's a glass where Venus' self hath looked,
And left her beauty's image ; and mark this,
The purple larkspur ! Might not royalty
Rejoice to wear the robe this simple flower
So modestly assumes ? Are these not books ?
Look on the lily pure, and tremble, guilt !
I read their coloured pages, and grow wise.

KELFORD.

'Tis a girl's love ;
Thou'lt change these thoughts with years ;
For hath not nature nobler works than flowers ?

CLORIO.

The trees — the village trees — I love them all ;
The oak, whose firm heart breasts the haughty wave ;
The pine, ambitious of the starry sky ;
Willow, that weeping bends, like widowed woe —
The Niobe of Trees ! And yet thou'lt smile

When I but name my favourite! Pray guess.

KELFORD.

The chesnut — 'tis a grove within itself;
Yet 'twas Salvator's idol ere 'twas thine.

CLORIO.

My passion shines less lofty: 'tis the hawthorn,
Whose green arms twine my home! I shake with joy
Its leafy hand, and welcome its old face.
You laugh! [*A pause.*]
Right well I know the tree can see me not,
But He who made both tree and girl doth look
In angel silence down, and blesses both!

KELFORD.

I'm schooled; my young enthusiast, speak on.
'Tis pity love like thine should e'er know change.

CLORIO.

But some I hate; they look like evil things.
The wrinkled elder, the sepulchral yew,
The rank and haggard fir, witch of the woods!
The gulf-betraying tree, that spreads a net
To snare the hunter's foot; and many more.

KELFORD.

Of these anon. Thy hand is on thy lute:
What hast thou new to offer — tune or song?

CLORIO.

If will were skill, then would I sing indeed.

KELFORD.

When skill is wilful, there's more prate than speed.

CLORIO *sings*.

What is richer far than gold?
 Sweeter than the lips of morn?
 Brighter than those hopes untold,
 Dying fast as they are born?
 Say for what kings bend the knee,
 Deeming it beyond a throne.
 Know'st thou not? Oh, 'tis to be
 Loved but for one's self alone!

Loved as hearts may love and live,
 With no sordid view beyond!
 All I ask the world to give
 Is a constant heart and fond!
 Were I monarch of the sea,
 Gold and priceless gems my own,
 I'd resign them all to be
 Loved but for myself alone!

KELFORD, *gazing upon her admiringly*.

My nightingale! my ever beautiful!
 Thy voice hath borrowed sweetness from thy love.
 'Tis worth Love's hearing when the heart's the lute
 The feelings play upon!

Love's the true master!

He lends a sunlight unto song, which wanting,
 Leaves all expression cold and spiritless.
 There's nought so sweet as love.

Think'st thou not thus?

CLORIO.

Nought so sweet as love of thine;
If still thou lov'st me?

KELFORD.

Love thee! Shall I swear?
By Cupid's self

CLORIO, *interrupting him archly, and with sudden animation.*

Nay, swear not! — least by him, the Proteus god!
The boy hath grown a man — his curly locks
Shorn of their golden beauty — and his wings,
His odorous plumes, alack! are stripp'd for quills.
Each day at Doctors' Commons, wigg'd and gown'd,
He greets the bench, and wins the applauding court
With knowledge of estates, green parks, and grounds.
Shews curious skill in searching musty wills;
Finds figure in a fortune, be she humped!
Nay, e'en a limp may seem a graceful glide,
A charming eccentricity of gait!
Wealth is your only multiplier: it makes one
So much like two, you'd scarcely note the loss!
Two eyes? 'tis an extravagance of sight!
Gold is the rouge which makes a wan cheek bloom.
Protest by Cupid? 'Tis a sorry oath!
No; swear upon the altar of these flowers:
And prove thou false, each leaf shall find a tongue
To bid incantious love beware man's vows;
For, like the leaves, they'll fall and be no more,
And leave an autumn in the heart, perchance,
Whose hopes shall droop, shall die, like wither'd leaves.

Alas, for love!

[CLORIO *sighs, and pulls the flowers, scattering their bloom sorrowfully.*]

KELFORD, *aside.*

What a creature it is!

How brilliant, how romantic, how capricious!
Now will she pout for a week, unless I coax
And soothe her humour.

[*Aloud.*] So gay, and now so grave!

Thus joy is ever timid of its power,
Whilst grief is all too bold. Resume thy smiles;
Joy is the sunlight of the heart. Thou know'st
We count a myriad clouds for but one sun.
Be, then, Affection our security.
We'll marry truth to joy; and Truth's eternal,
So Joy may prove immortal, married thus.
Nay, one smile!
One, like the red seal on love's perfumed note!
Ay, now thou look'st thyself! As beauteous
As that hour I saw thee first, and worshipped!

[*Enter BEAUFORD.*]

I'm busy!

What, Beauford, is it thou?

I'll hear thy song anon, my pretty page.

[*Exit CLORIO poutingly, but returns unseen, and conceals herself behind a marble group, listening.*]

Now what of Bertha? Will she list my suit?
Accepted she my note? Speak, what said she?
How looked she? Come, thy news and quickly.

BEAUFORD.

Thou'rt a strange, changeful being. Fresh from vows
To one who loves thee to idolatry,
As saints love some pure shrine and passionless.
Is't well, my lord? If this same ardour hold
For Lady Bertha, what is Clorio's fate?
Or 'tis not worth, perchance, your lordship's question.

KELFORD.

Preach not, but speed thy news. Thou saw'st her not?
I read it in thy look; thy pale, vexed lip,
Not liking the cramp tidings it must yield,
Delays its office with this senseless chat
Of Clorio. Clorio! Where's the use of it?
I must have some one to amuse dull hours.
I'd think the night but dark with all its stars,
If wanting that best light of human life,
The light of woman's eyes. For Clorio here,
She makes a better page and pleasanter
That she loves well her master; nothing more.

BEAUFORD.

Nothing more?
Why this disguise is fatal to her fame.
Who looks for virtue 'neath the roof of vice?

KELFORD.

Disguise? tut man, the world is full of it!
It hourly walks the street — a public speaker —
The busiest meddler known within the city!
Disguise?
Why, what a paradox is human life!

For ever seeming other than it is.
Ambitious of a straw, and casting down
The wealth of years to grasp it; eager still
The substance for the shadow to exchange!
Men of deep mind assuming coxcomb airs,
Whilst fops discourse like learned philosophers.
The maiden prates of battles, sieges, broils —
Changes her gunpowder for gunpowder —
Her beads for bullets — caps for cannon-balls,
And deems her chamber door but half secure
Unless she sleep with sword beneath her pillow!
The warrior, with a lassitude of limb,
Lets not the whitest hand allure his feet
Into the fascinations of the waltz;
Whilst the worn veteran, old and gouty-toed,
Smirks at the fairest, and with hobbling gait
Seeks the distraction of his toes, and dances!
The tall man hooks his shoulders to look less;
The little stretch to cracking to seem tall!
The groom affects to be a gentleman —
The peer assumes the habits of a groom!
And thus in the strange farce of human life,
The old and young — lean, fat, and short, and tall —
The grave, the gay, the trivial and profound,
Are handy-pandy which is which? and guess —
But farthest from the point: 'tis odds your right!
Some read the book the best the wrong side up,
And such should solve, or still with me exclaim,
Zounds! what a paradox is human life!
Disguise? quotha: why 'tis the very thing
Thou art about! Disguise, which suits thee not:
Let's have it; come my note's refused?
Thy steps forbade her door?

BEAUFORD.

'Tis even so, with much more contumely.

KELFORD.

The Graces curse her with their absence, then !
Love never cross the threshold of her house !
Now could I hate — if it were in my nature
To hate the Beautiful ! [*A pause.*]

I have a scheme
May reach her yet : this scorn is something new
In the sweet history of my gallantries ;
'Tis a fresh movement in the game, and spurs
My science in love's mysteries ; come,
We'll speak of this still farther : woman yet
Hath rarely proved an overmatch for Kelford. [*Exeunt.*]

CLORIO alarmed and agitated, steps forward.

Heard I aright ? And I have loved this man,
This cold and systematic libertine,
Who feeds his vanity on love betrayed,
Makes women's tears a daily sacrifice !
O man, ungrateful, false, unfeeling man,
That tramplest on the sweetest boon God gave —
A woman's heart ! say in thy sickness who
Makes her fond arms a pillow for thy head ?
Who, when that high and haughty bearing droops,
Sits like a ministering angel by thy side
To whisper hope, and comfort, and affection ?
Woman !
Hear it, O Truth, and register her name !
Say, when misfortune treads on enterprise,
When storms commercial cast thee on the shore
All wrecked and bankrupt of thy golden freight,

Who, when the herd forsake thee, yet clings true?
And still thy harsh and altered temper bears
With wise forgiveness, serving thee the more
That other friends should have forsaken thee;
Coining affections to make rich thy home,
And prove to thee, whilst God still left thee her,
Thou never — oh, thou never couldst be poor!
Who suffering half so much is so forgiving?
Who counselling so well is heard so ill?
Who loving so entirely, so devotedly,
Hath her love wounded half so cruelly?
The rose of her affections, leaf by leaf,
Oft scattered on the harsh and cruel winds,
Unheeded where it falls, how soon it dies!
And tell me, man, remorseless, reckless man,
Who, when the very softness of her nature,
Her tenderness, her weakness bids her fall
To thy relentless arts and perfidy — who,
Who abandons her to the sharp pelting
Of a pitiless world? shorn to the quick,
Outcast and desolate, to mate with shame,
Or find her only pillow in the grave?
Who?
God hides His face, and angels mourn — 'tis *Man*.

[*Exit.*]

Chapter XXIII.

SCENE—*A village; peasants merry-making; JACOB very consequential amongst them.*

PEASANT.

JACOB, give thee joy! We give thee joy, Jacob!
'Tis said thou art to be clerk of the parish.

JACOB.

It hath pleased the good minister
So to appoint it.

PEASANT.

The good minister? nay, the good Jacob
So to deserve it.

JACOB.

I do not vaunt — success maketh a man proud,
Nevertheless I assume no pride, peasants;
Though clerk is a pretty name and a worshipful,
Nevertheless I ask you not to say
Clerk Jacob! I say I ask ye not to call me
Clerk Jacob!

Although every man's title is his right :

Delectus esset dignitatis.

And Clerk Jacob's mine, if every man got his due.

I confess that I have a pretty manner withal,

And a voice of some mellifluousness.

Albeit it becometh not me so to exalt

Mine own acquirements : *principibus cede.*

PEASANT.

We give you joy, Mr. Clerk Jacob.

JACOB, *smiling conceitedly.*

Nay, good people ; nay, of a verity

I take it most unfriendly of you,

As to the Mister — *plain* Clerk Jacob !

I would assume no dignity unworthy

The occasion and the antiquity of mine office.

Vitiis nemo sine nascitur. I pretend not

To be better than my neighbours.

CLOWN.

Now, as thou art a learned clerk, I put it to thee,

Believ'st thou aught of witchcraft ?

PEASANT.

Witchcraft ? Oh, la, neighbours, let us away.

I dare never sleep alone o' nights

If I listen to witchcraft.

[*Exeunt* PEASANTS.]

JACOB.

Of what craft, good Master Clown ?

CLOWN.

Of witchcraft, sorcery, of bead and book ;
Of magic circles, round which dead men's bones
Dance to the hollow drum of their own coffins.

JACOB.

Of a verity, Clown : did not the wisest queen,
Ay, and the best old England ever crowned,
Did not Elizabeth consult the stars,
And summoned Dee, the great astronomer,
Conjuror, foreteller, and Satan's agent,
To name the day for her own coronation ?
Believe in witchcraft ? Of a surety, Clown.

CLOWN.

But hold they intercourse with spirits, thinkst thou ?
Eh, Jacob ? thou art learned ; a reader, Jacob ;
A studier of sciences, I've seen ; but mum !
I spied thee throat deep in old musty books,
Parchments, and pilèd papers ; and I said,
If thou wouldst seek out knowledge, Master Clown,
Shake hands now with thyself ; for here's the man
Could send thee home with every brain-shell loaded.
Tell me, though, honestly — now good Sir Clerk —
Believ'st in " numbers mystical." Eh, Jacob ? —
Eh, good Sir Clerk — good Master Jacob — Clerk !

JACOB.

Why Clown, — *quot homines tot sententie* —
As many men so many opinions :
Nathless I like not seeing. . . .

CLOWN *interrupting him eagerly, and rubbing
his hands.*

No — well ; no more do I.

JACOB.

What ?

CLOWN.

Nay, I said nothing — did I ? Well, good Jacob,
Thou lik'st not seeing. . .

JACOB.

Mystical numbers from all time have been
The ready beads of superstition, Clown —
Credulity the thread to hang them on !
Nevertheless I like not number *seven*.

CLOWN.

No, thou lik'st better number *one*, Clerk Jacob ;
A jest — no disrespect to thine office — a poor jest !

JACOB.

Thirteen at table suits my fancy not,
For thereon hangs a fatal prophecy.

CLOWN, *solemnly*.

Nine has been cursed.

JACOB.

Not cursed ; there be *nine* Muses :
Curse not the Muses, Clown.

CLOWN.

I know not what a Muse is.

JACOB.

Why thou *amuses* — ha! was I not quick?

'Twas jest for jest — a very nimble wit!

Three Graces . . .

CLOWN.

Three?

I know but *two*: what's the third?

We say but two i' the kitchen.

JACOB.

Not know? then knowing not the *third*

Mak'st thee a graceless Clown!

Ha, good again, i' faith — a spicy wit;

A very racy wit.

[*Going.*]

CLOWN.

Nay, an' you be a fetching of wit,

I am myself no indifferent carrier:

Tell me now —

[*Exit JACOB.*]

Gone?

[*Goes a few steps, and calls after him.*]

Jacob! Clerk Jacob! canst thou tell me . . .

He's gone, without hearing my best!

He should have heard my best;

Peter says its my best! Why is . . . [Enter PETER.]

I've told it thee before, Peter.

PETER.

Twenty times; thou scorest my memory daily.

CLOWN.

I lack counsel, Peter ; construe me this —
Is good sleeping true sign of a good conscience ?

PETER.

Sure, as good eating is sign of a good appetite.

CLOWN.

Then listen ; for I have that withal to tell thee
Will knock the feet of thy knowledge from under thee :
A bad conscience sleepeth not during the night —
Good !

PETER.

How, good ?

CLOWN.

Nay, the conscience is bad, but the *imprimis* good ;
A bad conscience walketh at midnight —
Muttereth to itself — holdeth discourse
With things invisible ;
For your bad conscience hath a cowardly sight !

PETER.

Well, well, get rid of thy bad conscience :
What next ?

CLOWN.

Lend me thine ear, and keep thy tongue close
Betwixt thy teeth, thus, lest it slip to thy lips :
Then follows it, Master Peter, [*Whispering.*]
That this Falkner

Hath an evil conscience ! I sleep over him ;
 First floor of all others from the ceiling,
 Cool in winter, hot in summer ; I'm but a clown —
 It matters not where I lodge.

But as I tell thee,
 This Falkner waketh me all hours of the night :
 It's not a little can rouse me, for I'm a hard sleeper.
 Well ! I start me up — midnight ; the old tower
 Striking one, two, three ; and bolt upright I listen :
 Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp, to and fro ; then a noise
 As though some one threw himself heavily
 Into a chair ; then — nearer yet ! — groans — Peter ;
 Such heart-splitting groans : oh, dear !
 Then a window slowly and creakingly
 Heaved up, as though the air of the place
 Had grown too hot for him.
 Once, when I could bear it no longer, I knocked,
 And inquired whether he were ill ?

PETER.

Well ?

CLOWN.

Well ; no reply — silent as fear : after
 Waiting some time I returned to my loft,
 And heard no more of him that night.
 Take my word for it, Peter, if our lady
 Weddeth him, the bridal wreath will prove
 Of black flowers ; a garland of crape,
 With gloves to match ; no man liveth long
 That sleepeth not : they say he's been in India !
 I like not people that have been in India.

PETER.

Thou mightst as well tell me — they say he's not
Had his dinner; I like not people
Who have not had their dinner.

CLOWN.

Well, peradventure I don't.

PETER.

Don't what?

CLOWN.

Like people who have not had their dinner.

PETER.

Thy most marvellous reason?

CLOWN.

'Tis plain as a pikestaff.
People who have not had their dinner
Are empty; emptiness is folly;
Folly is depravity — dost thou mark?
Depravity is vice, and vice is crime:
Ergo, it is a crime to be hungry!
People who have not had their dinner
Lack virtue; therein they are obnoxious,
Therefore in my disfavour.

PETER.

Thou hast been in wise company,
Where thou hast found more *whys* than *wherefores*;
But herein thou art unwise,
Therefore a clown!

CLOWN.

A non sequitur, Peter — a *non sequitur*.
Thy civility is a little soured in the bleaching;
That is to say, thou takest liberties.

PETER.

Let me take the further liberty
Of advising thee . . .

CLOWN.

Ay, Master Peter.

PETER.

Not to be over liberal with thy story
Of this Falkner: thy not liking him
Matters little, but his not liking thee
Might cost thee thy place. Be wary, Clown.

CLOWN.

I will, an thou wilt own now I have a learning,
And a nice skill as to causes — ente in question:
I do enjoy a bit of your deep philosophy —
I should like to dive, and bring up
Out of the great sea of knowledge
The why and the wherefore of every thing.

PETER.

Keep as thou art, Clown: the sea of folly
Hath as many divers within it,
And the knowledge they bring to the surface
Is equally popular.

CLOWN.

Popular?

I remember an orator, Peter,
A fine, lisping, mincing, gentleman,
So much *in love* with his own eloquence
That he was always *clipping* his own words.

PETER.

Clipping! ha, ha, ha! thou shin'st to day, Clown.

CLOWN.

I had but little schooling worth calling;
But genius, Peter, genius makes up for it.
Old Leadline, the schoolmaster, owns to this day
That when only in two letters, I made them
Sound out like words of three syllables.
Ay, Peter, but fine scholarship's a fine thing.
I learnt just sufficient to puzzle my brains,
And so made me a clown! If I get
A good thought, 'tis a blunder of nature!

PETER.

Why then, thy wisdom, Clown, might blunder here:
This Falkner, after all, may be in love!
Forgetful of his food — why proof of love!
Absent when spoken to — sure sign of love!
Given to lonely musing — still 'tis love!
Sleepless o' nights — undoubtedly 'tis love!
Thy adder's nest will prove a very dove's.

CLOWN.

Love? if that be love, I know no picture on't.

The Love I saw was apple-cheeked and plump ;
 A game of forfeits in the rogue's blue eyes ;
 Love, Peter? — pish, go wash thine eyes, good Peter ;
 Love's ever where there's feasting — mind you that.
 Love, quotha? I'd as soon wed the church-clock,
 And be struck on the head all hours of the day ;
 Not but a wise man may be mistaken, Peter,
 And one of less wisdom set him right.
 Thou hast scholarship !
 If I had sat on a Latin form for a fortnight,
 Like thee, I'd have known the language ere this.

PETER.

So, then,
 Thou dost own that some are wiser than thou?

CLOWN.

Ay, some are wise, Peter,
 And some are other-wise, Peter !
 I wish Jacob heard that :
 Some are wise, and some are otherwise, Peter.

PETER.

Come along. . . .

[*Seizing him jokingly by the ear, and pulling
 him off.*]

CLOWN.

Ha! you see I'm not to be led by the nose. [*Exeunt.*]

Chapter XXV.

SCENE — *Gardens and ornamental grounds adjoining the castle ; statues of the Classic Deities grace the many beautiful walks and vistas. Enter LADY BERTHA and ANNETTE.*

LADY BERTHA.

Most sweetly sang you ; but though music be
Almost a passion of my being, still
The verse, like to a silver swan, should float
Upon the stream of melody, and clear
Its graceful presence should be borne along,
Defined and perfect in its loveliness :
Note following note, like wave succeeding wave,
Should lift its theme still higher than itself,
Not drown it in the tide of harmony,
Lose it in billows of ambitious sounds,
As thou didst now. 'Twas passing sweet, I own ;
But there were words as sweet, the which I lost,
And should be glad to hear. Let's have them ; come,
And that without the music.

ANNETTE, *repeats the song.*

I told my lips they must disguise
The secret of my soul ;
But, oh, my heart flew to my eyes,
And told almost the whole !

Oh, eyes too swift of love to speak,
No more such thoughts reveal ;
'Twas vain : Love next upon my cheek
Wrote all I would conceal !

And thus by every glance betrayed,
My hidden love made known,
I'm of my very heart afraid,
For it seems *not my own* !

BERTHA.

'Tis as I thought, words worthy of the notes ;
If both thou canst not give, though both were best,
Then sacrifice the music, not the muse !
Sounds must be winged with thoughts and living words
To touch the heart ; without them sweetness dies,
Like odours robbed from flowers.

I'd sit and list

The simplest village air that lips could breathe
If in its simple spirit lay enshrined
The poet's warmth, the poet's ardent soul.
Remember this : better to read than sing ;
One task well done outvalues two done ill.

ANNETTE.

I will remember, madam ; but in this

I followed out the method I was taught ;
To give the note, nor heed, they said, the words,
Which were to music but subordinate.

BERTHA.

Hear this, ye spirits of harmonious song !
Poets that language have immortalized ;
Enriched it with expressions sweet as love !
Speak, mead and river, singing bird and brook,
Mountain and vale, forest and flowery dell,
Speak for your poet ! Oh, there's not a bud
Whose odorous birth the winds are conscious of
But owes associations sweeter far
Than its sweet self unto the poet's song !
There's not a feeling, passion, sentiment,
Grace, beauty, or attraction, but receives
A charm from his melodious utterance,—
A spiritual gift, which half connects
The earthly with divine ; makes beauty's self
Accordant to harmonious influences !
Oh, passionate spirit of poetic song,
How could I worship thee ! . . .
But I forget . . .

ANNETTE.

Look, dear lady, what marble god is this,
Whose noble head bears such resemblance to . . .

BERTHA, *interrupting her.*

To Falkner, thou wouldst say. Apollo, girl :
It is, indeed, most like that lofty front,
Where intellect doth sit as on a throne ;

The mouth instinct with gracious eloquence,
The grandeur of that all imperial air,
The majesty of manhood and of grace!
And yet unlike; for he, my love, seems sad,
Though all things smile as happy in his presence:
This god wore joy upon his conquering brow,
Yet sorrow dwelt where'er his footsteps trod;
No, 'tis not like, it is not like my Falkner!

ANNETTE.

The very children of the village love him,
Hold out their little hands with gifts of flowers,
Or aught to win a word, a look, a smile.

BERTHA.

Would they were here with flowers to win him now,
For all the world is dark without his smile:
My Falkner; no; he hath no paragon:
His voice is as the music of his looks—
Mournful, yet sorrowful as not of earth,
But as an angel thought of others' woes!
Oh, he is all that Love may idolize,
Exalted by its own idolatry!

ANNETTE.

Yes; Love is still its own interpreter,
None but itself should be its advocate.

BERTHA.

Oh, there's but one sweet word in all the world,
And that is Love: to love this beauteous earth,
This brilliant heaven, and Him that holds them thus,

In glory and perfection absolute,
Lasting as Truth, in His almighty hand !
To gaze upon the Earth's majestic face,
And say, Here breathes the genius of a God !
To love the world, yet single from its breast
One being to be loved beyond the world,
Oh, then it is we live ; then, then we live !
Affection is a child of Love, but wayward ;
The mortal child of an immortal mother !
But Love itself ! Seek from the centre, first,
To shake the sun ere shake true stedfast Love !
Harshness and cruelty, hate, coldness, scorn,
May make Love weep, but never make Love change.
Rob every flower from earth, and Love will find
Some way to bid it bloom ! Cover Love's path
With sharpest flint ; and though her life ebbed forth
At every step, un murmuring would she tread :
For in her breast — deep in her holy breast —
One flower still grows, root of celestial soil,
And angels' tears have watered its blest bloom,
Angels have wreathed its leaves around their heads,
So beautiful it is, and called its name,
That sweet flower's sweeter name, *Forgiveness* !

ANNETTE.

My dear, dear lady, God in mercy grant
Such love may find abundant recompense ;
Yet thou'rt so sanguine, ardent, confident,
I tremble, lady, for thy happiness !
What wouldst thou do should accident befall him ?

BERTHA, *alarmed.*

Accident? Falkner? he's been gone full long:
Know'st thou aught of it? Hath some evil chanced?
What is it? Speak! quick—quick, whilst I can bear it!

ANNETTE.

Nothing, dear lady; no, I but surmised . . .

BERTHA.

Surmised? did but surmise! 'tis very strange!
And yet he has been long, full long away:
I marvel it escaped me.

From the turret
The rough, wild road for miles is visible,—
Haste, tell me what thou seest; and if him
Wave thy hand thus. [*Exit* ANNETTE.]

O God, what fear is this?

Enter FALKNER, who starts, as though wishful to have avoided her.

BERTHA.

'Thou com'st at last!
Falkner, dear Falkner, thou hast lingered long!

FALKNER, *after several ineffectual efforts, in a broken voice,*

They linger long who bring unhappy news;
Slow are the steps which bear a heavy heart;
Tardy the tongue that utters words like mine—
I come to say, farewell.

BERTHA.

Farewell?

FALKNER.

But for a time.

BERTHA.

Farewell? Impossible! thou mean'st it not!

FALKNER.

Farewell; 'tis but a word that startles thee;
Were it "Good night," 'twould breathe of earlier meeting:
But many say "good night" who meet no more!
Death finds them at the turning of an hour,
And from their hopeful pillow to their grave
Is but one step.
Why, say 'tis not "farewell?" and let us part
As though to-morrow bound our lot again.
To-morrow comes —
A new to-morrow dawns for time to leap,
And our farewell is but a sleep, a dream,
To find that morn where parting weeps no more.

BERTHA.

Parting? Farewell? Am I alive? Falkner?
Thou lov'st me? I have not offended thee?
I have said nothing to have wrought this change?
Or have I loved thee so devotedly
My very truth is turned into offence?
What have I done that I should see thee thus,
With looks that do avoid, and love me not?

FALKNER.

That love thee not?
 When all within my soul grew desolate
 'Twas Bertha grasped the thorn to save me pain;
 'Twas Bertha's love, like sunlight, o'er me fell;
 Bertha, whose pity gave me back the world,
 Robed in the brightness her own beauty flung,
 And earth once more resembled Paradise!
 That love thee not? With looks that love thee not?

BERTHA.

Oh, be thou merciful, and kill me, Falkner!

[*Walks in violent agitation.*]

Oh, it was most unkind, unfeeling, rash:
 I saw thee not — I knew thee not — had been
 Most happy in my quiet orphanage,
 Hadst thou not come to shew my day, like night,
 With all the magic of thine intellect,
 Thy thrilling tenderness of look and voice,
 To win the love of mine enchanted heart!
 Oh, Heaven can witness how intensely dear
 The sound but of a passing word became;
 And thou — for pastime, for mere vanity —
 Hast nursed this flower to cut it from my heart,
 No matter how it bleed beneath thy knife!

FALKNER.

Bertha?

BERTHA.

Oh, was it right — or kind — or generous —
 To woo — yet wound: to sue — yet sting the heart?
 Whose only weakness was in too much faith!

Honour is love's vicegerent upon earth —
Was — was it honourable?

FALKNER.

Bertha?

BERTHA.

You spoke of wealth :
But what was wealth to me who had thy love,
Or, oh, too fond — too weak — *deem'd* that I had :
Love far surpassing wealth ! Of title spoke ;
But, weighed 'gainst nobler natures, titles seemed
The trinkets of a throne. Higher than kings
Is He who true pre-eminence creates :
Greater is He who stamps upon man's brow
Nature's high patent of nobility.
Wealth, title, all, were penury compared
To that best wealth, best title to be thine :
"Thine own !" "thine own !" I asked no other name,
No other rank, no dearer dignity ;
To be "thy wife," in its sufficient love,
Comprised all riches, honours, and degrees.

FALKNER.

Yet hear me, Bertha. . . .

BERTHA, *passionately*.

Hear me !
And pause ; yea, pause awhile, my Falkner ;
I am not one to bear this agony,
Nor wait the gradual breaking of a heart ;
And should we meet, indeed, no more on earth,
Then tremble, Falkner, lest we meet hereafter !

FALKNER.

Thou'rt not so rash? Let time bring time's account,
 And let us meet it!
 Heap fire upon me — torture me with words
 Which, if thou think'st I merit, speak, nor spare,
 Though every syllable's a poisoned thorn:
 Yet is my heart so full of direst pains
 It scarce can writhe much more!
 Oh, misery of memory, to be
 What I have been; to hear what I now hear;
 Whichever way I turn, is wretchedness.
 Not love thee? no, not love thee? Witness all
 Ye bless'd powers whose element is love;
 Be witness heaven, which, like a shrine of love,
 Sends light, and life, and union to the world;
 Witness all holy and all beautiful
 How dear, how passionately dear, I love!
 And witness, too, this dreaded destiny,
 That ever and for ever dogs my steps
 Like the foul shadow of some spirit doomed,
 Alone constrains my tongue to say . . .

BERTHA, *shrieking*.

No, say it not!
 Thou wilt not say farewell?
 Oh, Falkner, shew some pity; or, if thou goest
 Then fear what I may do! Fear and despair!
 I am distracted, wild — 'twere madness now
 To leave me to myself.
 I know not what I do — or what may do!
 I am distraught with more than brain can bear.

FALKNER, *aside*.

Be iron, nerves: be firm, my faltering heart:
Thou hast an eagle's flight, and not a dove's:
To waver now were to relinquish all.
And yet

BERTHA.

Thou canst not go — thou'st not the heart to go.
What, crush the dove which made thy breast her home?
Thou canst not do it, or looks belie the heart;
'Twere cruelty to do it — alas, thy pride —
I knew thy pride, but not thy cruelty!

FALKNER.

Of what should I be proud — of misery?
The victim at the rack shrieks not — for pride!
Such pride should even be thy Falkner's now.
And yet — and yet — I weep, my Bertha, weep;
Tell me these tears are but false witnesses —
Say that this quivering lip is still untrue —
This throbbing pulse — deceit; tell me this heart,
That with tumultuous beatings cleaves my breast
As though 'twould find a passage to thy feet,
Is hypocrite! — say still 'tis cruelty!
'Twere blissful to be aught but what I am;
Madness were mercy to this misery!
Again, that word again, 'twere what to do it?

BERTHA, *imploringly*.

Yet, for all this, thou didst not say farewell?

FALKNER.

God knows I did — and must.

BERTHA.

Then, guise it as thou wilt, 'tis cruelty!
Thou dar'st not see the heart bleed thou hast broken;
Thou stabb'st and leav'st thy victim.

FALKNER.

Am I so base!
I who've sought honour's path —
As to the height of all achievement here;
Who, were death cast between my path and it,
Had clung to honour rather than to life!
To hear — [BERTHA *droops; she supports her.*]
Bertha, my love, I will not say farewell!
Tears, tears — still tears to kiss away!
I am a boy, a child, and not a man,
An infant, that the fates dash where they will!
I'll see thee, love, again, and speedily — when,
If thou'lt take this hand 'tis thine for ever!
But we must quit this spot: be patient, love,
Thou canst not hear me if thou weepest thus.
[A pause—she recovers—FALKNER *retiring.*]

BERTHA.

Stay, Falkner, I conjure thee!
I command thee, stay!
[FALKNER *turns, she steps before him.*]
Thou goest not hence.

FALKNER.

Not hence?

BERTHA.

No!

FALKNER.

What can restrain me?

BERTHA, *sinking and exhausted with agitation.*

A fragile thing — a slight and powerless thing —
Yet one thou could'st not, ingrate as thou art,
Thou would'st not tread upon! no, no, nor scorn,
Nor roughly pass; no, nor for kingdoms leave!
Though thou regard'st it little now perchance;
Yet then, my Falkner, then 'twill rivet thee,
As though an angel cried, "Thou goest not hence."

FALKNER.

Nor earth, nor all earth holds, may stay my foot!
It is my fate; I act not of myself,
But am the very thrall of destiny!
What's that may grapple fate and bar its path?

BERTHA.

My corpse! [Swoons at his feet.]

FALKNER, *kneeling and raising her tenderly and pityingly.*

Straws — straws are we upon the stream of fate!
Oh, worse than blind not to have this foreseen!
My poor, wronged girl, thus pale and stricken down,
How in thy desolation dearer far
Than in the beaming beauty of thy hope!
How weak looks vengeance near thine angel face;
It palsies so the hoarded hate of years,
That guilt might stand within the dagger's reach,
Yet vengeance turn aside with tears — not blood!

My love, my Bertha, have I veins of stone,
 Unknowing mercy — knowing scarce myself;
 My very hand seems changed and strange to me!
 My love, I will return! a little while!
 But for a little while, I do not say farewell!

*[He bears her off with great tenderness and
 sorrow.]*

Chapter XX.

SCENE—*A wooded ridge sloping to a ravine; a wild rude bridge spanning a rocky chasm; two of the gipsy-gang are seen crossing the bridge; they come forward.*

BROLSON.

THY scheme's o'er long—the briefer plan the better—
A dagger in his throat were quicker done,
And quieter. Granting we seize the lad,
What then? At every step there stands a bar:
Take we the path thy project travels out—
Detection is as certain as the act;
And we may lock the gyves upon our wrists
At once. Egad, I feel them now even with thy talk.

RIVDILL.

Pooh, thou wert born *at night*, and thus thy brain
Is full of boggart shapes and nervous fears;
I, who saw light one fine bright summer-morn,
Am fearless, enterprising, strong, and bold;
Belike too sanguine—'tis a better fault
Than thine, of meeting trouble half the way.

BROLSON.

If thou demurr'st, why be it so, say I.
But think, his death just doubles our reward.

RIVDILL.

And Wolfbane, too, how wilt thou manage him?

BROLSON.

Lord Kelford doubts this Wolfbane, and demands
Our utmost secrecy, with prompt despatch.

RIVDILL.

Secrecy with Wolfbane? with . . . ha! ha! ha!
Were he against the murder of this youth,
If thy quick hand were even at his throat,
Thy knee upon his breast, thy dagger's point
Uplifted for the blow — that Wolfbane's eye
Would, like a spell, arrest it in mid-air,
And fix thee powerless!

BROLSON.

I defy his power! first for the deed,
And next for the reward, which having fast,
We'll put some thousand leagues between this wood
And our abiding-place. What need we fear?

RIVDILL.

Fear?
Fear his art, his spells. Laugh on, I care not!
I too can laugh pretended power to scorn;
But Wolfbane's no pretender: he *has* power!
I've seen, ay, felt it shivering through my frame
Until I stood like ice; no foot could stir,

The ground and I were one, incorporate,
Until he breathed upon each marble limb,
And I stepped free !

BROLSON.

Stand back, for here he comes.

RIVDILL, *pale and trembling.*

Who? Wolfbauc?

BROLSON.

No, 'tis that witch, old Midgley.
And with her comes our prize — look to thy knife :
Back . . . 'neath the trees !
So, we're in luck. [*They conceal themselves.*]

Enter MIDGLEY and ADOLPHUS.

ADOLPHUS.

How drear and dismal hang these toppling cliffs,
Haggard with age? It seems a place unblest !

MIDGLEY.

'Tis scarce the spot for thy young eyes, my boy.
They'd better love the free and open fields
Than these o'erhanging, frowning precipices :
There are as strange deformities in Nature,
As many passionate and reckless features,
As there be moods of mind : thy love is yet
For Nature's mild, unwrinkled countenance —
It suits the softer memories of thy youth.
But cheer thee ; thine's a good brave heart, my boy,
And most unlike thy proud unnatural father.

ADOLPHUS.

My father? You knew my father, then?
I've some remembrance of a lofty form —
A noble soldier whom they called my father;
Was he so?

MIDGLEY.

Thy sire was in the army.

ADOLPHUS

Mine is a dim, deceiving memory :
Sometimes I fancy I have dreamt it all.
You knew my father? Oh, I'm glad to speak
With one that knew my father!
What is thy name?

MIDGLEY.

Call me Midgley.

ADOLPHUS.

Midgley ! it seems as in a dream I'd heard
That name before ; yet is not all a dream?
This savage wild, these woods, thyself?
The wailing voices of the wind-lashed trees,
As though the storm had scourged them ruefully?
And these strange mutterings of mysterious things?

MIDGLEY.

This wood is never silent ; its great heart
Beats with a thousand pulses ; in the night
'Twould make one think that spirits walked abroad.
Such shapes and sounds startle the eye and ear.
But of your father? Think you of him still?

ADOLPHUS.

There never passed the day I thought not of him :
I love my father ; but my heart ne'er beat,
My eyes ne'er filled with tears, my tongue ne'er faltered,
As when I thought of her, my poor, lost mother !

MIDGLEY.

Dead ! that, too, I know ; woe for her loss !

ADOLPHUS.

Dost thou believe the Dead can list our prayers ?
That they, who loved us to their end of days,
Retain their sympathy with human love ?
That, conscious of our tenderness, they watch
In angel pity o'er us ? Can it be
That our remembrance is yet dear to them ?
Oh, blest persuasion ! oh, most sweet belief !
Angels of brightness, is there one indeed,
One of your heavenly host, who watcheth now,
With all a mother's tenderness of gaze,
To guard the pathway of her orphan child ?
Oh, when, dear angel-mother, may I kneel
Beside thy humble grave, in humble hope
That still thou seest my love, and lov'st me still !

MIDGLEY.

I have wept more with thee, and for thee, boy,
Than e'er I sorrowed for my own hard griefs,
Or death of kin, where tears are natural.
If e'er thy mother watched, she watcheth now !
What age wert thou when she, thy mother, died ?
'Tis fancy, boy ; thou canst not recollect her !

ADOLPHUS.

Oh, yes, I do! Not recollect my mother?
 I was not six, yet I remember her:
 Though nothing in the room, nor frame, nor furniture,
 Nor aught, only my mother! only my poor mother!
 How pale she looked! I cannot call her features:
 A pale and weeping face, and garbed in black;
 So pale, I weep at its remembered paleness!
 Oh, I bethink me well — how close she clasped me!
 Again, and once again, how sad she spoke,
 'Till some one entered, speaking angrily,
 And bore her weeping, shrieking, and imploring,
 Where I ne'er saw her more!
 And now she's dead! my poor, unhappy mother,
 And left me with one only wish on earth,
 Which I have prayed for daily, yes, and nightly;
 It is to see her grave, to kneel upon it,
 To say how much I loved, would have consoled her,
 How still I cherish her dear memory,
 And that I count the swiftly passing days
 As steps upon the road which leads me to her!

MIDGLEY.

I know thy mother's grave!
 Now, wouldst thou to it?

ADOLPHUS.

Thou know'st it? thou? They said she died abroad,
 Was buried none knew where; but let us go!
 Thou'rt human? nothing evil? that would tempt my soul,
 And make my love the bait for my perdition?
 I am a boy, a poor neglected boy,

Wishing to be good, yet no one teaching me;
I know not where begins that sin we read of,
That sin against the Spirit, where it ends.
I may be jeopardising even now
That hope which is the lamp of my existence,
To reach my mother's sainted arms in heaven!
What art thou? thou hast a dark, unpardoned look,
Like one God hides his face against . . .

[*Starts away, alarmed.*]

MIDGLEY.

I am going to thy mother's grave!
Wilt go?

ADOLPHUS.

Thou wilt not harm my soul?

MIDGLEY.

But one besides myself can shew it thee,
And when we die
All knowledge of her burial-place dies too!
Thine eyes will never gaze with filial love
Upon that hallowed mould!

[*Going.*]

[*Exit* MIDGLEY.]

ADOLPHUS.

Hear me! have mercy!
Oh, assist me, Heaven!
Angels, that hover round me in my dreams,
Be near me in my waking! Midgley stay!
Take me! do what thou wilt!
Shew me my mother's grave!

[*Exit* ADOLPHUS.]

*Re-enter BROLSON and RIVDILL, cautiously and stealthily,
from under the brushwood.*

BROLSON.

Cast thy cloak thus round the old beldame's throat,
Strangle her first, then hurl her o'er yon rocks
Beyond the firs; they have a dismal depth
No eye can penetrate. Leave *him* to me;
The fewer hands the better for despatch;
I'll finish him, and quickly: hush! be firm!

[*Exeunt warily.*]



Chapter XXII.



SCENE—*A mountainous pass; the path rugged and dangerous; a huge trunk of pine thrown, as a bridge, over a torrent.*

Enter FALKNER.

FALKNER.

ARE we by both deceived, Virtue and Vice?
Doth Virtue cheat and crush us? Vice deceive
And curse? In different modes betrayers of our hope?
Dark is the world, and drear, and difficult!
Nature's doom'd children are baptized with tears,
And Misery is their sponsor!

Love and Friendship are
But other names for life's anxieties!
This little round of time, this petty sphere,
Revolves amidst perpetual woe and care —
Disease and suffering, poverty and sin!
What's life to care for? and for that honour,
Which I have idolised as next to heaven,
What is't? — a dream, a passing dream; and yet

Great minds love lofty action not for fame !
 'Tis the spontaneous product of the soul,
 Springs from itself, and is its own reward :
 Long be it so.

Two acts I must perform,
 Which, if I now may judge from what I feel,
 In honour and in justice are demanded !
 Yet these two acts, born of my brotherly love,
 My deep, o'erflowing, never-ebbing love,
 May brand me but with infamy ; and her,
 Whose name I dare not speak and think upon
 The deed I am about — what unto her
 May be the issue ?

Enter JURUS, hastily, whose interruption seems to ruffle

FALKNER.

JURUS.

Leave him unscathed to an offended God !
 His death could nothing grace thy sister's grave ;
 Her griefs are wept away ! Think better on't ;
 The Lady Bertha loves thee, fame reports ;
 Think less of him, more of thine interest.
 If all the wicked must be hurled to death,
 The world would lack inhabitants ere long ;
 I'd have thee to thine interest more alert
 Than cast thy life upon a ruffian's sword !

FALKNER, *contemptuously*.

Interest ! Self-interest ! 'Tis the common cant,
 The mean in mind call wisdom of the world ;
 'Tis that which leads the shallow stream of life,

Arrays the hypocrite in virtue's guise,
Calls *over-reaching*, knowledge of mankind !
Dull Honesty the workhouse slave, whose rags
Lend jests to those whose finer cunning thrives.
Self-interest ! 'Tis a thing whose heart is coin !
And yet the higher virtues of the soul
Find in its mouth an hourly currency ;
None *speak* of reputation, honour, worth,
Frank liberality, and generous faith,
None, like self-interest ; so expert the cheat,
It half deceives itself with its own vaunts !
Self-interest ! 'tis the dastard's ready shield,
The tyrant's plea, the swindler's crafty creed,
Who, honouring law, stops short of legal crime ;
'Tis — mark me, sir ! a boaster in success ;
A mean and abject driveller in that hour
Adversity's sharp whip cracks at its heels !
Self-interest ! name it not ! there is no sound
So sickening, so perfidious to mine ears :
If e'er my stay offend thee, there's the word
Shall rid thee of my presence ! Interest !
Self-interest !

JURUS.

Too hot, and over nice !
But 'tis thy humour to behold things thus,
With a most jaundiced and distemper'd view ;
If each man studied his true interest
His fellow-men were better'd by that study.
Exaggeration is not argument,
Nor hard words facts. But be that as thou wilt,
Another's happiness is in thy keeping !

Thou hast no right to peril her young life
 In perilling thine own: avoid this man!
 His sins, like bloodhounds, hunt him to a death
 More sure, more keen, than stab of any steel!
 When broken, friendless, old before his time,
 Revenge could seek no fiercer punishment.
 Less abject, less debased, might claim thy sword.
 Oh, I implore thee give this venture pause!
 Instead of the corrosion of thy conscience,
 Reap the enjoyment of a godlike act,
 And learn forgiveness!

FALKNER.

Jurus!
 Thou'st heard of one, a pilgrim to some shrine,
 Who travelled weeks and months, nor food, nor sleep,
 For the dry crust could scarce deserve that name,
 And the few snatches of outwearied nature
 Might scarcely claim the title of repose.
 What wouldst thou think, after all toil and fasting,
 All conquering of the rough impediments
 Mountain, flood, rock, might cast upon his way,
 To count not elemental harassings —
 If, when his eye beheld the shrine he sought,
 His foot pressed — ay, within few steps of all
 For which he'd welcomed pain, fatigue, and fasting,
 Thou crossedst his path, and saidst, "Proceed no further,
 Religion points to thy neglected home!
 'Tis Superstition, and not Sanctity,
 Which mocks thee here! Get to thy vineyard back!"
 Thinkst thou he'd turn his staff from east to west,
 And easily, as the blown thistle-down,

Go, at thy breath, the way thou marshall'dst him?
No! Feelings time hath rooted change not thus:
Granting his theme Devotion, mine Revenge!
His Love, mine Hate! Why human hate is fixed
As Herculean rock when love's a reed!
Thus 'tis with me, each hour that intervenes
Between Resolve and my assured Revenge
Is cursed as barren! Let me hence!

JURUS.

A moment and I quit thee; yet beware
Lest Passion urge thee down a gulf so deep
That Honour ne'er again may snatch thee back;
Stain not thy sword but in accepted challenge,
And Heaven shield well the right! [FALKNER *impatient.*]
Be calm!

FALKNER.

Thou seest I'm calm!

JURUS.

Calm? Yes, that calm which follows when we hurl
A rock from some high cliff that fronts the sea;
That calm which intervenes between its fall
And its hoarse thunder in the deep below!
Thus calm art thou! For now is thy descent;
The thunder is to come! [FALKNER *still more impatient.*]
Soon, thou shalt go soon!

FALKNER.

Shall? Nay, I will!

JURUS.

Thou shalt !

FALKNER.

'Tis shaming time to linger ; but hereafter,
 Lest thou mightst think hadst thou resisted more
 I had been turned away from this intent,
 I'll tell thee, Jurus, of my dream last night.
 My sleep is but a torture of foul dreams,
 And not repose. 'Twas a dull, vapoury night,
 The stars came few, and in their misty hoods
 Looked cold and comfortless ; straight in my dream
 Steps numberless I saw, as to a throne,
 The throne itself invisible ; yet something
 Vast and imperial through the hovering clouds
 Mine eye could trace, heaving its shadowy front
 Midway amidst the heavens. On the steps
 Forms of all times, all ages, and all nations—
 The young, the old, the brave, the beautiful,
 The proud and poor, the beggar and the prince,
 The maiden, with a presenee like the rose,
 The babe, as from the mother's breast withdrawn,
 Lay dead upon the steps of that huge pile.
 Far as the sight could range nothing was there
 But death ! nothing but death ! — some lay with heads
 All gashed and bleeding — others with bare breast
 Stabbed — and the clotted current purple-dried :
 Others — 'twas horrible

When, suddenly,

Broad as a comet streaming upper air,
 Appear'd a mighty sceptre — on engraved
 Was Destiny. The shadows heaved convulsive,

In cloudy billows tost the sea-like sky,
And, as though palsy shook their marble veins,
The throne-steps lost their dead ! I woke,
Yet did the vision long enwrap my soul,
Still blazed that mystic scripture, Destiny !
It haunts me still ; so blinds with blood mine eyes,
That all I see is crimson to my sight —
All earth incarnadine, the very air,
Is gory ! Let me on ; thou'rt mad to hold !

[*Breaks from him.*]

I follow Destiny !

[*Exit FALKNER.*]

JURUS.

Counsel unloved is vain : alas, for Man,
Who lifts his evil Passions on a throne,
Crowns it with curses, swears allegiance to it,
Bends, like a slave, to minister its wish,
And steep'd in sin, cries out, "'Tis Destiny !"
Call it by any name, 'tis Passion still :
Whereon —
If there's, indeed, that thing called "Destiny,"
It rides as with a whirlwind to destruction :
I follow ; but to what ? Oh, dreadful thought !
May Pity hide the page that tells the deed,
Or blot it out for ever !

[*Exit JURUS.*]

Chapter XVIII.

SCENE — *The Forest.*

Enter Robbers quarrelling.

BROLSON.

Either be for me or against me, then !
 Have with the deed, or leave the deed to me,
 And keep not lurking thus from rock to bush,
 Ever resolving, never resolute !
 Make men of mice ! Call rabbits valiant !
 I'd rather be a hare for human hounds
 To hunt and bark at than be such as thou :
 Oh, I've no patience — none, with tender thieves !

RIVDILL.

If Midgley quits him, then his fate is sealed ;
 But not till then : one word's as good as fifty !
 Old Midgley tended me when I was sick,
 Dying of fever, and so might have died,
 For any else but her. 'Thon'dst think it brave
 To cut the throat of her who saved thy life ?
 I'm bad enough, and reckless of my road,

But there's one step too savage for me yet,
And that is — murdering Midgley !

BROLSON, *sneeringly*.

Scruples of conscience ! What is conscience worth ?
Will it provide thee drink, or purchase bread ?
Or canst thou market with it for a crust ?
I'll rather to hell-common go at once,
And daisies pick at half a groat an acre !
Put up thy conscience now, and I'll be sworn
I buy thee fifty better consciences
For half the gold this short and easy deed
Will gild thy palm with ! And the time, the place,
Never was such a spot for secret murder —
So dim and dreary, silent, wild, and lone !
As Nature meant it for such purposes.
Curses upon it to be hampered thus . . .
Why, thou agreedst . . .

RIVDILL.

To slay the lad, but not to injure her :
There is no sum set down for slaughtering her ;
And if there were, I am not to be bought :
Nor harm, nor see harm done : so, have a care.

BROLSON.

Go threaten girls ! The time, the place, the chance,
And all gone by ! all lost ! 'Twould vex a saint
To be thus bound and mated with a fool.

[*Exit BROLSON.*]

RIVDILL.

A fool !

Perchance the dismal grave beyond the firs
 Thou pick'dst for Midgley soon may prove thine own!
 [*Exit hastily.*]

SCENE — *Edge of the forest ; a level tract of country :
 village seen in the distance.*

Enter MIDGLEY *and* ADOLPHUS.

MIDGLEY.

Come, cheer thee boy ! the weary forest passed,
 The way is smooth and easy ; that we seek
 Lies near ; within the green and quiet dell,
 Some less than half rood from yon castle-gate :
 Few moments' walk the churchyard will be seen.
 And so thou sayst thy nurse was kind to thee ?

ADOLPHUS.

A second mother, tender to a fault,
 And often chid old Dorothy, that she
 Would rarely let my stool come nigh the fire :
 Poor Nurse : more than two days from out her sight !
 She's half distracted at my absence now.
 Well ! I'll tell her soon how kind and good thou wert,
 And what a faithful friend I found in thee.
 Thou'lt come and see us, Midgley : wilt thou not ?

MIDGLEY.

Thou wouldst not shut the door to in my face ?

ADOLPHUS.

What ! ?

MIDGLEY.

Nor set some brutal dog to wound my heels?

ADOLPHUS.

What I?

MIDGLEY.

Nor shriek out witch? nor set thy comrades on
With stones to clear the village of my rags?

ADOLPHUS.

Midgley! this to me?
I would not hurt the wing of a foul crow,
Nor harm a toad though it should cross my path;
God gave it life, and it should live, for me,
Unscared, unscathed; and thou, who'st been so kind—
Thou saidst it but to try me?

MIDGLEY.

I did!
My heart, boy, is a coffin, wherein hope,
Home, union, friendship — what should yield to us
Respect, regard, affection, 'mongst our kind —
All, all, lie dead! and, in their stead, I've what?
Contempt and curses, spurns and hateful gibes,
And language beggar'd for opprobrious terms,
As witch, hag, fury, viper, and the like!
Witch? hag? I am a woman!
Viper? I am human!
I have been tried, yet ne'er did being wrong;
Whipp'd — who'd have wept to see a dog so bruised!
Branded for crimes I never did commit!

And wouldst thou learn the reason for all this?
 Go howl it in the public market-place,
 'Twas *poverty*!
 The witch was poor, could nothing pay the law;
 Deformed, could bribe no counsel with fair looks;
 Friendless, so fitter for scourge, jail, and brand!
 The good have friends, the friendless must be bad.
 Thou wilt have gold, my boy, remember me!
 Give me sufficient for the world's respect;
 'Twill be a trifle from thy coming wealth:
 Wilt thou? I would be loved!
 I thirst for woman's sympathy, and cry;
 But in this human desert is no water,
 No spring for lips that mate with poverty;
 No pity, none, for those that need it most!
 Boy, not all their stones have beaten from my breast
 God's feeling out, and still I love, love thee!
 Thou hast not turned thy noble face away,
 Though I am seared and frightful to thine eyes;
 Thou hast not mocked me, jeered, nor flouted me,
 Though well I know my voice a raven's croak,
 My habits strange and foul; yet thou refrain'd'st,
 Nor spurned the human reptile from thy path;
 But stead of scoffing, tears! Deny it not,
 I say thou wept when I laid bare my woes,
 Wept! tears! and 'twas for me! God bless thee for it!
 Bless thee! God bless thee for it!

Answer not, but follow me;

It does me good, it soothes my wearied brain;
 'Twas something still to find one human eye
 Could drop a tear for Midgley.

[*Exit, ADOLPHUS following.*]

Chapter XVIII.

SCENE — *Wooded avenue leading to Kelford Castle ; the moon rising dimly ; Falkner, disguised ; watching.*

FALKNER.

There is a brooding horror in the hour,
As if the heavy air held breath, alarmed !
A sluggish stifling atmosphere ; I choke
'Neath its oppression !
Who says that life is short ? Time hath no guage ;
A moment may comprise eternity ;
We talk of life, its hopes and its results :
Its span-like brevity, — but I have lived
Years in a few sad hours ! It seems an age
Since dawned the day, and yet 'tis hardly night !
Oh, charitable Night, merciful Night,
That shuts the dreaming eyes of wretchedness,
Consoles the weary fever of the heart,
And makes the poorest equal to the rich ;
What hast thou been to me, but misery ?
Sleepless, and dark, and desolate of hope.

[*Paces to and fro.*]

How like a prowler do I hang about !
 I'll lurk no more, but challenge fate at once,
 And beard the villain in his sensual den.
 Were it not well to feign some message there ?
 Some note from Bertha whom he seeks to woo,
 As Jurus tells me, and gain audience thus ?
 Once in the room, he goes not forth alive !
 'Twere double vengeance thus to feed his love
 Then curse it in the bud ! A note of hers,
 But change the name, is right for him as me.
 He'll scarce come forth to night, — then in — then in !
 For every hour, as 'twere an avalanche,
 O'erwhelms my being with some horrid fear
 Of his escape, some wild anticipation
 Of defeat, of failure, and disgrace !
 Fate do its worst — I'll dare the worst to come !

[*Exit FALKNER towards the Castle.*]

Enter BROLSON and RIVDILL.

BROLSON, *enraged.*

Escaped ! through thee.

RIVDILL.

Take my advice for once, and make the best on't ;
 This is the place, and near the time appointed.
 Kelford expects us here — let's swear he's dead :
 Receive the wage, and do the work at leisure.

BROLSON.

Not I.

RIVDILL.

I doubt this lord ; doubt, if the deed were done,
We should reap aught but threats of punishment ;
A rope in pay — a gibbet for reward :
By Cain, he comes.

Enter Kelford hastily.

How now, what seek ye here, so near the lake ?
Deep in the dell I bade ye both await me.
I'm glad you're found ; glad, very glad you're found.
We will speak further ere ye move in this ;
I have thought better of the act — the boy . . .

RIVDILL, *stepping before* BROLSON.

Is dead :

The blood scarce dry, as you may partly see,
Upon my dagger's edge.

[Kelford starts from it shudderingly.]

One stab sufficed.

KELFORD.

Stabbed ? the boy — dead ? oh, villains ! villains !

BROLSON.

Were we not *hired* to do it ? promised gold ?
What mean you then by this pretended horror.

KELFORD.

Murdered ! It cries from earth ; it will be heard.
His blood — his innocent blood.

RIVDILL.

The purse — the gold — our wage ; payment for work
Even we found hard to finish . . .

[KELFORD *laughs convulsively.*]

You laugh ?

KELFORD.

Laugh ?

'Twould make e'en devils merry to behold
The payment ye shall count. What ho, there, ho !

BROLSON.

Nay then, to pay ourselves . . .

[RIVDILL and BROLSON *attack* KELFORD, *who*
defends himself desperately, but is at last
beaten down.]

RIVDILL.

Our payment ; — Brolson, cut it from his heart.

Re-enter FALKNER, with his sword drawn.

What cry was that ? Ha, ruffians . . .

[FALKNER *strikes up* BROLSON's *sword and*
wounds him ; KELFORD *rises — and the rob-*
bers rush off.]

FALKNER.

Not hurt, I hope ?

KELFORD.

A flesh wound, nothing more ;
And that it is no more, I've your brave sword

And braver arm to thank ; — the villain's breath
Smoked hot upon my face ; an instant, and . . .

FALKNER.

The odds were much against you. Can my arm
Avail you further in assistance home ?
The dastards may return.

KELFORD.

Less for your aid, than for your company,
I'll be your grateful debtor ; 'tis not far :
My castle . . .

FALKNER.

Castle ?

KELFORD.

Stands close by, beyond the lake.

FALKNER, *aside*.

His castle ? should it ? no :
Fate cannot be so mad.

KELFORD, *seeing his agitation, turns suddenly*.
They've not returned with others in their train ?
No ; by your looks, methought they had.

FALKNER, *breathlessly*.

Your name ?

KELFORD.

Kelford.

Why look ye thus ? What see you ?

FALKNER, *in a hoarse, hollow whisper.*

A monster!

KELFORD.

Heard'st thou aright? What mean'st thou?

I say my name is Kelford.

FALKNER, *recovering.*

I saved thy life — thou own'st it? —

KELFORD.

I do.

FALKNER.

There is a wretch —

A ruffian worse than these — villain abhorred —

Whose very name turns all my blood to fire

And burns each nerve, each writhing nerve, to torture.

I must have vengeance: — Wilt thou lend thine aid?

KELFORD.

I will.

FALKNER.

He was a friend, but he betrayed his trust;

Dishonour'd those who strove to honour him,

And murder'd one I loved: — Wilt lend thine aid?

KELFORD.

I will.

FALKNER.

You promise well.

KELFORD.

And will as well perform.

But let us to the castle.

FALKNER.

Better here.

KELFORD.

Go on.

FALKNER.

Murdered, thou heardst?

He *murdered* her I loved!

The first love of my heart, my young fresh heart,

Choice of its earliest wishes — life of life —

More beautiful than hues of heaven can paint,

Or angels reach, or seraphim conceive,

She was; — she *is* what his cursed hands have made her;

Dust of the earth! and still the miscreant lives;

The scoffer smiles; — the murderer quaffs his wine,

And laughs — and laughs at vengeance.

KELFORD.

Some rival?

FALKNER.

Rival? fiend! some fiend!

Incarnate demon; minister of hell: —

Accursed the hour my sister saw his face.

KELFORD.

Sister? thy sister? — speakst thou of . . .

FALKNER.

I was a prisoner, chained in Hyder's cell.

KELFORD, *aside*.

India! what, what do I hear?

FALKNER.

Imprison'd, chain'd; the traitor knew his time:
But ill news strides apace—I heard—heard—heard—
And called the earth to cover me.

[FALKNER *buries his face in his hands, distractedly.*]

KELFORD.

Have patience.

FALKNER.

Patience? Hear me:
In Indian warfare, 'neath a scorching sun,
I toiled in the defences of the siege,
And saw my father perish at my side;
Whose service there some petty insolence
Of new authority enforced! He died;
But I had patience!

Hear me yet:

I had a friend who shared my heart from youth:
'Neath his command, against the Mysoreans
I battled, and was captured: sir, his troop
E'en to a man had fought, and perished too,
Ere I, in Hyder's dungeon, worse than death,
Had lain a prisoner; but he—he retreated!
Left me to suffer long captivity:

The torture of a bondage, by report
 The most inhuman Tyranny could shape !
 He fled — but I had patience !
 God tempered me to bear it — till the news
 Of a beloved sister's fame dishonoured !
 The legacy of a dead mother's love,
 My father's favourite and long-cherished child,
 Dishonoured, and by one that sire had-served !
 'Twas then I curs'd my chains, and challenged life
 To show on earth a greater wretch than I ;
 'Twas then I breathed an oath in Hyder's cell
 To barter all for vengeance ! then, 'twas then,
 I tore my flesh, and held my bleeding hands
 To God for justice !

I was heard ! escaped !
 Am here ! — Now, prate to me of patience !

KELFORD, *aside*.

'Tis Falkner ! Courage — let me lose no chance —
 Detection trembles on a point — a move —
 Coolness and boldness must avail me now :
 He cannot know me, from my change of name.

FALKNER.

'Thou look'st.

KELFORD.

How ?

FALKNER.

As though some spell had struck thee into stone.
 Perchance thou knew'st this . . .

KELFORD *eagerly, yet with embarrassment.*

Nothing — 'tis nothing — nothing, save thy story.
A woman's name is light, and lightly goes.

FALKNER.

A Woman's name is linked to something holy !
It is a thing to love — to estimate —
To honour — to defend : a Woman's *name*,
Oh, 'tis her wealth, her power, her patrimony ;
Which, *wanting*, opulence is beggary ;
All other strength, all other vigour — *weakness* !
It is the very magnet of her life ;
The charm, the grace, the sweetness of her being :
And he whose rancorous breath — or viler still —
Whose coward treachery that name assails,
Is villain deeper stained than language finds
Contempt for !

KELFORD.

I — you mistake, misjudge my meaning —
I thought not to — but, but your story —
You lost . . .

FALKNER.

Long — long 'twas thought he had escaped ; although
Defeat but added strength to my resolve,
Like him (the fabled) who to earth being thrown
Rose at each new prostration doubly strong,
So leapt decision from each overthrow.
All times I sought him, morning, noon, and night —
All places, from the music-breathing hall,
The revel and the dance — the gilded rout ;

Down to the meanest walls where knaves conceal
At last.

KELFORD *alarmed — aside.*

There is a curdling horror in my blood ;
My words swell in my throat until too large
For utterance —

You, you still pursued ?

'Twas wonder nature sank not 'neath the toil.

FALKNER.

Food rarely passed these thin and fever'd lips ;
I had no appetite but for revenge —
No thirst, but for the chalice of revenge !
It cast a shadow 'tween me and my God,
Made day like night, clothed all the world in black ;
It was the hand that struck each note of time —
Revenge ! revenge ! deep, terrible revenge !

KELFORD *trembling, and losing all presence of mind.*

What mean'st thou ?

FALKNER.

At length we met ! thank God of heaven, we met !

KELFORD.

Who ? what ? art mad ?

FALKNER.

The villain, monster, I was telling thee ! —
(I shall be choked) this double ruffian, lord,
This black defamer of my father's house,

Despoiler of a sister's virtuous name,
We met !
Met when the savage gloated o'er new spoil
Dainty and fair, ontrivalling the old,
And in the midst — steep'd to the lips in guilt
Perform'd, and guilt intended — lord, WE MET !

KELFORD, *starting back, as wishful to escape.*
'Tis FALKNER !

FALKNER, *rushing before him.*
Oh, is it so? your lordship knows me, then?
Be blister'd thy foul tongue, and ever dumb,
That dared to utter, dared to breathe a name
Thou hast dishonoured, villain !
[*Throws off his disguise, and draws his sword.*]
Thy sword.

KELFORD.
Hear me yet, Falkner — thy sister . . .

FALKNER.
Sister ! . . .
Will heaven not strike thee dead before my sight?
Coward, thy sword !

KELFORD, *rapidly.*
Not here — his blood hath not well dried — not here —
'Twill drag my soul to everlasting doom.
Give, give me time — give time —
I'll meet thee where thou wilt.

FALKNER, *pressing on him.*

Thy sword.

KELFORD.

One word.

FALKNER.

Thy sword.

KELFORD.

One word — in mercy.

FALKNER.

Ha! ha! ha! ha! Mercy?

Thou prat'st of mercy, whilst she stands beside thee,
Shrouded and pale, and on her cheek a stain,
A brand not e'en the grave hath bleached away.
Who fixed it there? Who stabbed her reputation?
Who slew the modest beauty of her soul?
Seest thou that dreadful finger point?

'Twas thou!

Another yet, a grey-haired father. Nay,
Thou can'st not move! Dead hands, thou mayst not see,
Secure thee like a vice!

Not draw? Not draw?

[KELFORD *draws, and makes an agitated and unequal defence*; FALKNER *bears down each feeble guard, speaking all the time.*]

Then to thy heart I strike the avenging steel
To the glad hilt — the hilt — with curses, lord!
And to perdition sink thy sinful soul;
For 'tis — hear it, thou doomed! it is a Falkner's arm

Avenges thus a dear loved sister's shame !

[*After vainly endeavouring to speak, KELFORD dies.—A pause.—FALKNER approaches the corpse.*]

So, dead ! Then what am I, he being dead ?
Was't thou, pale clod, degraded a loved name,
Stamped infamy upon a trusting heart,
And steeped a virtuous house in misery ?
And we endure this from such things as thou ?
Insects a blow can.

[*Slight sounds of distant footsteps.*]

Then I must hence —

But not without thee, lord, I love thee so !
So love, I cannot quit thee e'en in death !
To that dear sister's grave thy arts destroyed,
Thou, her destroyer, will I force to kneel ;
Ay, *bend thy stiffening joints in supplication !*
Face to her grave thy caitiff corse I'll set,
Then leave thee there, with her accusing dust,
Until the foul fiends claim thee !

[*Exit, hastily, with the body.*]

Chapter XIII.

SCENE — *Interior of Kelford Castle; CLOWN listening at the library-door.*

CLOWN.

I'm sure I heard strange noises from this room,
Or from the room beyond
But always are there noises in this place,
As Jeannette says, noises and startling cries,
And doors that sing and whistle on the hinge.
Yet there was something more than these just now :
Voices in passion ! . . . [Listens again.]
There's mischief brewing in this hated castle.
Would I were out ! I'm always in some scrape !
The ferrips take my legs for bringing me,
And take my mistress, too, for sending me ;
'Tis always, Clown, do this ! or, Clown, fetch that !
Fresh orders thick as hail ! — as though a Clown
Had not a soul, not even to his foot !
“Go, follow Falkner,” says my lady, “Clown ;”
And here I am ! [Enter JEANNETTE from side-door.]
And what's to come of it ? [Listens again.]
Could I see Jeannette now ! . . .
[JEANNETTE slaps him on the back.]

JEANNETTE.

What seek you here? Listening at people's doors —
Fine conduct, sir; sneaking in lobbies thus,
And eaves-dropping . . .

CLOWN.

Not at doors; eaves-dropping is at windows!

JEANNETTE.

Never tell me, sir; I'm ashamed of you!

CLOWN.

Ashamed of me! 'Twas but the other day
That you were proud of me.

JEANNETTE.

What! when you saved the drowning man? ay, that
Was noble of you; this is mean.

CLOWN.

One can't find drowning people every day,
And dive and save them. Now, wouldst thou jump in,
I'd dive a mile or I would fetch thee out!

JEANNETTE.

Have done with you! A pretty fetching out!
Thou'd save a pudding sooner than Jeannette.

CLOWN.

Why thou'rt my pudding, dumpling, round and sweet,
Full of all fruits, like to a Bakewell one!
Thy lips are cherries; peaches are thy cheeks;

Thine eyes black currants; and thy nose a plum —
 A white one, large and finely prominent;
 Thy teeth like nuts just blanched, and fragrant white;
 Honey of rose and raspberry thy breath;
 Thine ears are figs! . . .

JEANNETTE.

Figs! that for your figs! [*Boxes him.*]
 I'll teach you, sir, to say my ears are figs!
 These ears your betters have admired, and oft.
 Figs! figs, indeed! A murrain take your figs!
 [*Vapouring about.*]

CLOWN.

I'm always in a scrape!
 Gave any one to me a purse of gold,
 'Twould lead me in some scrape before an hour:
 What makes another's fortune ruins mine.
 [*Footsteps approaching.*]
 Here's some one coming; scrape on scrape 'twill be.
 Now, Jeannette, then, I meant it all in jest!
 Like figs! Like water-lilies, small and thin,
 And silver fair and graceful, are thine ears!
 Thou know'st I love thee! Meant thee no offence!
 There's some one near, and I must not be seen.
 [*JEANNETTE opens the door half sulkily.*]

JEANNETTE.

Figs, indeed!
 [*Holding the door open, and boxing CLOWN as he passes her.*]
 That I should live to have my ears called figs!
 [*Exit after him.*]

SCENE — *Ruins of a Gothic church by moonlight; the grave-yard, stained with mossy damps, weed-grown and desolate; a low tomb in the centre, with the initials E. F., and a cross above; the corpse of Kelford leaning with the hands clasped over the tomb, the face bowed over them, a clasp-knife and cord lying beside.*

Enter MIDGLEY and ADOLPHUS at the steps of the gateway.

MIDGLEY.

Thy mother was a pure, unspotted wife,
Thyself the heir of Kelford! May'st thou prove
Worthier than he who now inherits it!
I've proofs substantial.

[MIDGLEY turns and sees the corpse.]

Merciful Heaven! What's that? a corpse?
Great God, that still eternal justice holds:
Thy hand is here!

Boy, bend thy knee:
Behold thy mother's grave! Pray for the soul
Of him who was thy father; for here he lies —
If there be truth in sight — a murdered man!

ADOLPHUS.

Murdered!
Oh, I saw nothing but my mother's grave!
What monster hath done this? And yet, take heart,
He may have only fainted. . . .

Dead, dead! quite dead!
Oh, what a wretch am I to find thee dead!

I prayed to see my mother's grave, and 'twas decreed
That when I saw it I should see thee dead!
My prayers have murdered thee, my dead-found father!

MIDGLEY.

Canst thou love him whose falsehood killed thy mother?

ADOLPHUS.

He is dead! All here have need of mercy,
Of pardon, of forgiveness. He is dead,
And will offend no more!

[MIDGLEY *examining the foot of the grave.*]

MIDGLEY.

Oh! what is this? a knife! and *Falkner* on it!

[*As she comes forward with the knife, enter hastily
Retainers and Followers of LORD KELFORD,
with Officers of Justice.*]

OFFICER.

Seize that hag! Take heed the lad escape not!
A horrid deed, and dreadfully they'll answer it.

[*As they are about to seize ADOLPHUS, he draws
himself up proudly and firmly.*]

ADOLPHUS.

Touch me not here! upon my mother's grave.
I will not move a limb but as you choose,
So you keep back your hands one moment, sirs.

[*He bends sorrowfully over the grave, kneels, and
kisses it.*]

OFFICER.

This is the second murder found since noon!
 For 'tis more probable that poor young girl
 Found some base hand to plunge her in the wave,
 Than of her own accord she had found out
 A stream so black, so foul, and desolate;
 A place where sun did never penetrate
 Since yon grey forest its first childhood knew!
 There is an awful grandeur in the spot
 Which had rebuked away a suicide.
 Poor soul! how beautiful she looked! I wept,
 She was so like a sister I had lost.
 I wept, went out, and sorrowed like a child!
 Well, 'tis not oft my heart thus shames my face;
 Yet she had parents — brothers too, perchance —
 Poor souls! poor souls! it is a trying world.

FOLLOWER.

Was there no clue, then, to her parentage?

OFFICER.

Nothing; nor letter, token, ring; save one
 Mysterious paper, in her bosom placed,
 Written thereon, "A bridal gift to Bertha."

ADOLPHUS.

Now where ye will, I am in Heaven's hands!

MIDGLEY.

Did I not tell thee, boy, the hag was poor?
 If poverty's not guilt, why looks it so?
 Ha! gyves for the hag; bind hard, good Christian men,

What matters it how the old witch may suffer?

OFFICER.

Relieve her hands.

MIDGLEY.

What! twice in a day? The world grows tender, sure!

[*The followers bear off the corpse; ADOLPHUS
follows erect, yet mournfully.*]

Chapter XXX.

SCENE—*Early morning; rural lands; a mill by a mountain-stream, with huge stepping-stones; CLORIO, still in disguise, crosses the stream, and comes forward.*

CLORIO.

They're fools that love, but double fools that wed;
 Let who will wed, I'll live and die a maid:
 Love! 'tis a draught of gall, with one poor drop
 Of honey! A nettle hid 'neath roses!
 'Tis years of sours to one short month of sugar!
 Love is a gambler! — staking all her heart
 Upon a single throw, and losing it;
 Where winning, she'd win nothing!
 Men's hearts are nothing, as much feeling there
 As there is feeling in a painted heart!
 Men's hearts are nothing — empty as their vows,
 On which maids build love-castles in the air,
 To fall and crush them; no, I'll love no more:
 I'll love no more!

But who comes here so sad?

'Tis, as I live, a wooer of my hand

Some twelvemonths back ; but who methought
Knew less of love than of philosophy !
I'll stay and plague him.

Some had pined for weeks,
Sunk into apathy, or died of grief.
I feel all action ; Would I were a man ;
I'd challenge every man, and one by one
Rid earth of her worst fruit !

*Enter JURUS thoughtfully ; CLORIO walks up to him,
and touches him on the back with her cane.*

CLORIO.

Give you good morning, sir ; you know me not ?
Men have long memories when they serve or lend,
But short ones when they borrow — you owe me . . .

JURUS.

What ?

CLORIO.

A kindness, sir : that is not much, you'll say ;
Which proves you've learnt but little of the world,
From which 'tis hard at any time to get
A kindness !

JURUS.

You're merry, sir.

CLORIO.

Merry ? 'tis not an hour ago I wept,
And now my heart betwixt a smile and tear
Seems vibrating ; touch ye but either side

The difference of a feather, nay, a hair —
 I'm laughing or lamenting ! Mark you, sir,
 Mirth is to mourning nearer than supposed ;
 Smiles may be born of sorrow, joy of grief ;
 The blushes of the morn are types of tears !
 You're a philosopher, an alchymist,
 And should at least know this.

JURUS.

What kindness owe I you ?

CLORIO.

There was a giddy girl you late admired,
 A clever gay coquette you favoured once,
 One who'd have wreck'd your heart within a week,
 Or in a month at most : you loved her much,
 And I persuaded you to wed her not :
 This is the kindness you're my debtor for.

JURUS.

Methought I knew thy face — a something there
 Reminded me of . . . of the kindness, sir,
 Your counsel granted me ; there's danger oft
 In talent ; like the glowworm in the grass,
 Its brightness is its ruin. Poor Louise !

CLORIO.

You loved her then ?

JURUS.

Would I had not ! For plainly, sir, she was
 Of Nature's contradictions still the first !

Much loved, much feared, much censured, much admired;
Was good, yet giddy; vain, and yet had sense;
Trustful, yet jealous; humble, yet ambitious.
She could be humble, good, admired, and loved,
Or giddy, vain, ambitious, and despised.
She was to me the single ray that lit
The home my heart had longed for; and when lost,
When lost . . .

CLORIO.

Lost! I thought she lived,
And that in no choice company, 'tis said.

JURUS.

I know what's said :
Oh, we are wondrous moral — virtuous too
In shaping paths for other feet to travel !
Where there's no interest, no self-sacrifice,
No private ends to compass or complete,
Our sense of justice is unparalleled :
Moles are we to our own deficiencies,
Lynx-eyed to others' follies and defects.
I know what's said — 'tis Scandal, sir.
There's a nobility within her soul
At which vice stands rebuked. Vain, but not vile ;
Giddy, not guilty. No ; 'tis Scandal, sir.

CLORIO *to herself*.

And I refused this man to court a fop,
An empty mask of man, a coxcomb, fool!

[*Turning to JURUS smilingly and sportively.*]

Oh, scandal, sir ! I know my Lady Scandal :
 I saw her busy at our neighbour's house,
 Peeping beneath the blinds, and whispering ;
 Blushing a thousand shames, with lifted hands,
 As wondering to herself, "*Can* such things be ?"
 She travels half the universe and more ;
 Speaks every language underneath the sun ;
 Familiar with the Ganges as the Thames ;
 Knows all from Tartary to Ethiopia,
 From Moscow to Madrid. With eager step,
 Fresh from St. Petersburg she breathless brings
 The hundredth *faux pas* of Queen Catharine.
 She's the world's monitor, and people fear
 Her little finger more than courts of law.
 She rails of husbands false, of wives eloped,
 Of babies born the mothers only know of ;
 Divorces and seductions, damages ;
 Of dukes and debt, conceit and beggar-pride.
 And whilst she rails she laughs, and wonders where
 Such creatures think they'll go.

JURUS.

You're out of breath. . . .

CLORIO.

So is not Madame Scandal :
 Nothing's too high, too low, too near, too far for Scandal ;
 She speeds upon a moonbeam, and tells tales
 Of fair Diana and Endymion ;
 Cautions the stars 'gainst Jupiter's amours ;
 Something of Leda's swan and showers of gold ;
 Swears Saturn ate his children ; nay, what's more,

That Venus is no credit to the skies,
And marvels how the heavens can harbour her.
To maidens lacking partners for the dance
She speaks of rival beauties, of false teeth,
Dyed locks, and padded shapes, and cheeks of rose —
Blushes just born of vegetable rouge —
Flirtings, coquettings, jiltings, and intrigues.
And thus she laughs through life: for each she whips,
She's twenty laughers to enjoy the lash.
Leave but their own backs scoreless, half the world
Will laugh to see the other half exposed.
So Scandal keeps her audience. E'en from church
She'll seize the preacher on his passage home,
Mix with the congregation, and set all
The parish in a broil: this done, she laughs,
And says the world has grown too bad for her —
This giddy world, this madeap wicked world,
Has grown so bad 'twill be the death of her!
Oh, Scandal, sir — I know my Lady Scandal!

JURUS.

'Tis pity mirth like thine should e'er know change.
I like thy mood: thou'rt something like Louise,
In talent as in features; forward, pert,
Yet pertness losing its offensiveness
In something innocent and loveable.
I like thee much; for sorrow is with me
So constant in attendance, I would fain
Claim friendship with a nature light as thine.
What sayst thou? shall it be so? are we friends —
The cheerful youth and grave philosopher?
Morning and night make but a single day;

So we, though separate and different,
May still be *one* in friendship; as the day
Is *one*, though morn and night be different.

CLORIO.

If ever friend were true, I will be true.
Not for the sunlight merely was I born;
Not for the morning only: well I know
The night hath glory richer than the dawn.

JURUS.

I shall believe in sympathy — believe
That souls have kindred chords, which, once but touched,
Thrill through the being with a sense of joy,
Of love, of happiness, unknown before.
I'd thank thee for thy friendship, but that thanks . . .

CLORIO, *interrupting him*.

Are words, mere words, which any one may say:
Let's have "no words" on friendship's first sweet day.

[*Exeunt.*]

Chapter XXII.

SCENE—*A hall in Indworth Castle; FALKNER stern and inflexible, stands to the right of the hall; BERTHA, pale and agitated, but full of confidence, by his side; MIDGLEY and ADOLPHUS, with OFFICERS OF JUSTICE, at the left; Guards, the Retainers of LORD KELFORD, and the Attendants of LADY BERTHA, fill up the background.*

BERTHA.

A sinful charge, a base malignant charge,
 A monstrous charge, and most incredible!
 The witnesses unworthy least belief;
 One living hourly, openly, in crime;
 One of a herd of gypsies, vagrants, robbers,
 Who nightly in their calling prowl the forest:
 Who else so like as her own self to have done it?
 What drew her to a spot so far remote
 As that in which you found her? . . .

My Falkner,

'Tis rightly done to treat this empty charge
 With scornful silence; 'tis not worth thy tongue!
 I would believe the sun itself were black
 Ere question thy fair honour!

OFFICER.

The lady speaks it sooth. What proof have ye
To fasten this dread deed against a man,
A gentleman, of high repute and character,
Whose general bearing gives the lie to this
Malicious, cruel charge? What say ye?

MIDGLEY.

The knife found by the corpse—the open knife,
Whereon engraved appears the name of “Falkner.”

3

BERTHA.

'Twere a stale brain could not devise as much!
The boy — what says he? Did he see the murder?
No, nor the knife! 'Twas found by that false hag;
And 'twere poor cunning could not so contrive
With what name on't might suit the purpose best!
Shame on thy lip; I see the lie upon it!

JURUS, *aside*.

O might of love! the dove become an eagle!

OFFICER.

You say your only evidence is this,
The knife, which bears no trace of such an use!
The knife, and nothing more? You saw him not?
No one escaping? Not a glimpse to bind
A probability against this man,
Or lodge suspicion 'gainst his character?
The knife? which might be stolen for such purpose.
No other evidence? Sir, you are free!
This woman and the boy must hence to prison,

There to take trial for this heinous deed ;
And much I fear it will go hard with them.

ADOLPHUS.

So help us God, as we are innocent !

OFFICER.

You're found beside the corpse, and no one near ;
None, save yourselves, upon the spot to question ;
And on your lips and in your eyes are seen
Terror, and tears, and misery ! Away —
Each circumstance but tends to criminate.
Guards, to your duty. Prisoners . . .

FALKNER, *after an agonised struggle.*

Stay !

Yet — wait yet — a moment ! 'tis true ; I —
They are innocent !

[*With choking utterance, and hiding his face from*

BERTHA.]

I am guilty !

OFFICER.

Thou the murderer ?

BERTHA.

Alas, he's mad !

Believe him not ! Falkner ! Why dost not speak ?
Speak, ere my senses leave me ! Falkner, turn :

Look at me . . . [He uncovers his face.]

Merciful Heaven, that face ! Oh, cruel ! cruel !

[*Faints, and is borne aside by her attendants.*]

FALKNER, *looking up determinedly and loftily.*

Murder . . .

'Twas justice, and not murder !

There are some crimes on which the law is silent,

And this was one in which my sword was law :

He stabbed me, and I slew him !

OFFICER.

Stabbed thee ?

FALKNER.

Ay ; are there no stabs but from the dagger's point ?

No deeds more sharp than steel ? no words, no wrongs,

Whose cursed edge may wound, whose poison kill,

Whose venom strike, and yet the striker smile ?

Are there no stabbers but where blood must flow ?

He struck me through the dearest heart alive —

The noblest, kindest heart of all the world :

He struck me, and I slew him !

MIDGLEY.

Thou slew'st him that he did betray thy sister !

FALKNER, *gazing after BERTHA.*

All things are equal now : *I did.*

MIDGLEY.

Then art thou murderer ! He betrayed her not :

She was a loving, pure, and spotless wife !

FALKNER.

Pure — saidst thou pure ? a wife, and undisgraced ?

Say it again — again — a spotless wife !

MIDGLEY.

She was his wife.

FALKNER.

Prove thou but that, and I'll die blessing thee.

MIDGLEY, *shewing papers from her bosom.*

The proofs are here, and fully witnessed :
Methought to make them serve me in my need.
The priest he deem'd a knave was priest ordained ;
A good, though weak and easy-tempered man,
Who cringed to fault, but would not stoop to crime.
She was his wife, and thus the rite performed.
Concealed within, where they might clearly hear,
And see, and vouch, unto the ceremony,
He had his witnesses, but sworn to silence,
Until the time should come, as come it has,
When innocence might need their testimony,
To purify its name to all the world.
Why didst thou seek this black and heavy deed,
Thou proud, revengeful, miserable man ?

FALKNER.

You count not the temptations men withstand,
But that 'neath which they fall ; whereas, if known,
Those well withstood were twenty 'gainst that one.
Thou deem'st me rash ! Was not his guilt the same ?
Intent as vile, unfeeling, profligate ?
Why shew a baffled traitor as he were
A man to honour ?

MIDGLEY.

A sinful man he was, and therefore had
More need of living to repent his sins.

FALKNER.

And who art thou asserts this?

MIDGLEY.

The sister of that priest, but one whose word
Is little worth, were testimony wanting;
But for these proofs and living witnesses
Wild Midgley's oath might aid thy cause but slightly.

FALKNER.

Give — give them me.

[He tears them open, and attempts to read.]

'Tis vain —

The letters sink and tremble 'neath my sight:
The proofs are here — and yet my faithless eyes
Refuse to read them — valid proofs are here,
Proofs of her love, her innocence, her wrongs, —
Iniquitous as great — yet, yet I faint —
And the lines swim and melt in one another: —
Am I a man? or weaker than the weakest?

*[He nerves himself firmly to the task, and reads:
after a pause,]*

The priest — thy brother — where is he?

MIDGLEY.

Dead.

FALKNER.

My — my sister knew this?

MIDGLEY.

Alas, she did: six years ago he died.

FALKNER.

I see, 'twas *then* the tyrant struck his victim;
Struck — with a coward's weapon: —
How eam'st thou with those vile associates,
Men whom the voice of justice soon may doom —
Abandoned, godless, guilt-carousing men,
Who drink of human sorrow as 'twere wine,
And prey on men's misfortunes — knaves, whose breath
Is poison to society, whose deeds
Feed superstition with the grossest food,
And build their hell on human ignorance?

MIDGLEY.

Ask me no farther: what I know, I know;
What I have done I have elsewhere to answer;
What I believe is not for thee to judge,
Who, scorning God's divine authority,
Mocking the image of His sacred power,
Denied the wisdom of His heavenly mercy,
And struck thy brother dead before His face,
Still glorying in that guilt thou call'st revenge,
Justice and judgment!

Oh, blind-hearted man,

Worse than the God-unseeing infidel,
Who, still *believing* in a Judge divine,
Wrests justice from him!

FALKNER, *roused to the utmost passion.*

Know'st thou not a day, nay, even an hour,
 May make the mind, heaven-visited and pure,
 A denizen of hell; a moment give
 The seed, root, leaf, and full-expanded fruit
 Of ripened passion and of crime matured;
 A moment shape the destiny of life,
 As it did mine in Hyder's cursed cell;
 A moment more blot out eternity,
 And baptise guilt in blood; brand years with shame;
 Rend out the core, the innocent core of the heart,
 And plant perdition there; change Nature's cheek
 From youth's fresh beauty into haggard age;
 For never more the angel of the morn
 Shall come with gladness to the murderer's heart,
 But midnight and its haunting shapes be there, —
 Midnight perpetual and perpetual dread;
 Whilst late Repentance, with its vulture-claws,
 The murdered to the murderer shall hold up,

[As if beholding what he describes.]

Still face to face the living and the dead,
 The slayer and the slain — ay, front to front,
 The life-like corpse unto the corpse-like life?
 A moment! 'tis a cup in Horror's hand!
 Who spoke to me of murder?

[Turns wildly and sees ADOLPHUS, who advances towards him.]

My sister, too? *thou*, too, against thy brother?
 Then I am lost indeed!

[Seeing ADOLPHUS nearer.]

Ah? who art thou,
 Who wear'st an angel's face, yet art of earth?

MIDGLEY.

Thy sister's child.

FALKNER.

Her child ! her child !

[FALKNER *slowly kneels* ; ADOLPHUS *runs to his arms* ; he *struggles for a moment*, and then *bursts into an agony of tears upon the boy's breast* ; then *suddenly starting to his feet.*]

Make way, if ye would live !

Nor urge a desperate, mad, and doomèd man,
Who counts no more your bristling fence of steel,
Than reeds he thus could scatter on his course :
Come death or freedom !

BERTHA, *breaking from her attendants.*

Save him — O Falkner ! Save ! will no one help ?

None — none — none to keep this heart from breaking ?

[FALKNER *throws himself violently amidst the javelins and bayonets of the guards* ; after a *rapid struggle* he *staggers back wounded*, and *sinks at the feet of BERTHA.*]

FALKNER, *after a pause.*

'Tis well, 'tis home !

Home ? home ? Alas, who may receive me there,
In that eternal home to which I hasten ?

[*To BERTHA, who supports him.*]

My Bertha ! oh, had I but met thee earlier,
Ere this strong passion, like a baneful weed,
Filled every space and avenue of thought,
Clasping my being with its poisonous leaves,

I might have lived blest in thy heart's affections,
 Seen sweeter beings gambolling at my feet,
 And blessed the angel-voices of my home!
 I loved thee, Bertha; none save her whose love
 Grew with my stature, mingled with my blood,
 My youthful pride and soldier-sense of honour,
 Had stood betwixt my soul's deep truth and thee.
 Think of me, love, when I shall be no more;
 And if thou canst with kindness . . . with forgiveness!

BERTHA.

Shall I e'er think of thee and not with love?
 Speak of thee not with honour? thou who wert
 My heart's first, last, its own and only choice!
 'Twill not be long that I can think of thee;
 Not long, perchance, but it will be till death!
 Long as I breathe; long as this heart may beat,
 This brain can think, whose every thought is thine;
 Long as I live, I'll love and bless thee still;
 And shrine thee, love, in that which cannot die, —
 My soul, — that, with God's grace, may live hereafter;
 And, oh, hereafter, love thee still in heaven!

FALKNER.

Angel thou art, and heavenly are thy thoughts,
 And we may meet; for Heaven forgives mankind
 More in one hour than Earth in centuries.
 If this be death, then it is sweet to die —
 Forgiving and forgiven.

Adolphus!

[*He places ADOLPHUS'S hand in BERTHA'S.*]

He is her child — her unprotected child;

Wilt thou — both loving and both sorrowing,
Alike in evil fortune — be to him
A friend? . . . [*Starts and gazes wildly around.*]
Hark! who calls? — her voice! Sister, I am here,
Dying for thee! Through Him who died for all
Seek thou thy brother mercy — mercy!
[*With sudden energy.*]

There lay no stain upon thy dying breast,
That sanctuary of honour was unblurred;
Angels received thee spotless, stainless. [*He falls.*]
Ah! sharp is death. Close — press me closer, love!
Shield me within thine arms a little while,
Set love 'gainst death: 'twill conquer even death.
'Tis all eternal. Love survives the tomb:
Immortal; — 'tis immortal, Bertha; — fixed; —
Though buried 'tis not lost; — there is a soil
For love to bloom again beyond the grave!
[*He dies; BERTHA falls senseless upon the body.*]

End of Dramatic Chapters.







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